The Problem Of Human Subjectivity In Hegel's Thought, With Particular Regard To The Relationship Between Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* And His Mature Philosophy Of Religion

Thesis

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The problem of human subjectivity in Hegel's thought, with particular regard to the relationship between Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* and his mature philosophy of religion

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ABSTRACT

I seek, in this thesis, by means of a critical exposition and comparison of Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* and his mature *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, to elucidate the relationship between human subjectivity, the self-conscious experience of humanity and the absolute truth which is absolute spirit, God. The apparent divorce of positive biblical narrative from its reflective interpretation is not, it is to be argued, the result of the importing of critical philosophy into the domain of Christian experience. Rather, it is intrinsic to that very experience. The tension between positivity and inwardness, so central a problem to the concerns of the earlier philosophy has, by the time of the mature philosophy of religion, become an opportunity, rather than just a problem, for Christianity. Understanding the continuity between Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* and the ostensibly very different speculative system, also enables one to understand the relevance of both to contemporary (and especially religious) experience.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN REFERENCES

References to Hegel's works in the text and endnotes are given with the following abbreviations:

ETW: *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971

This edition contains several of Hegel's early theological essays. Those referred to in this thesis are indicated by the following abbreviations:

PCR: *The Positivity Of The Christian Religion*

SCF: *The Spirit Of Christianity And Its Fate*

Page enumeration in the case of these latter (PCR and SCF) always refers to this edition of ETW.

FK: *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977

LPR: *Lectures On The Philosophy of Religion* (1827), ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 (one volume edition)

PM: *Philosophy of Mind* (vol. 3 of *The Encyclopaedia Of The Philosophical Sciences*), trans. W. Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1971

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the problem of human subjectivity in Hegel's religious thought, with particular regard to the developments between Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* and his mature philosophy of religion. By the probiem of human subjectivity is meant the problem of the relationship between human self-consciousness and human consciousness of God. It should be stressed that the term 'human subjectivity' does not (as is so often the case in non-philosophical English usage) suggest an arbitrary or relative understanding of truth. Rather (as in the German philosophical tradition) it connotes the manner in which truth is experienced in the self-conscious lives of particular human beings. The relationship between Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* and his mature philosophy of religion remains a matter of some currency within contemporary Hegel studies. In particular it is debated whether or not the theological and existential idiom of Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* (which were completed before 1801) is sustained in the mature *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1827, or supplanted by a reductive

philosophical account of the content of Christian belief. This thesis argues that a theological and existential problematic is not only sustained in the mature philosophy of religion, but is also a central factor in Hegel's philosophical development towards the later theological works from the earlier ones.

Hegel's reception in German intellectual life by the generation which immediately followed him was largely dominated by the divide between Left and Right Hegelians. With regard to his theology, Left Hegelians (such as Stirner and Ruge) asserted that Hegel's mature philosophy requires the reinterpretation of Christianity in exclusively secular (and therefore social and political) terms. The development of this interpretative perspective leads to the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach and eventually to those of the young Karl Marx (*1844 Manuscripts*). Counter to this, the Right Hegelians (such as Rudolf Heym), asserted that Hegelianism provides a theological warrant for maintaining the political status quo (especially that of the hierarchical structures within the Prussian state).

Examination of each of these strands of thought in relation to the other raises acutely the question of what, if anything, in Hegel's thinking might be characterised as being specifically Christian in nature rather than just a secular philosophy of history and of culture. Equally important is the question of the significance of a faith in the reality of Jesus of Nazareth as an historical person (and as such the historicity of the entire biblical account) in relation to subsequent secular history. The reduction by the Left Hegelians of Hegel's philosophy of religion to a mere anthropology is later echoed in Benedetto Croce's *What Is Living And What Is Dead Of The Philosophy Of Hegel* (1915), in which the philosophy of religion is ranked amongst 'what is dead' (*1). It is the consideration of the two strands of interpretation just outlined as characterizing respectively the Left and Right Hegelians which contributed to the most radical of all critiques of Hegel's thought in the nineteenth century, that of Søren Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard, Hegel's 'Christian' philosophy of history represents the negation of any authentic personal faith, denying it any real existential content (*2).

Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich, two Protestant theologians writing at the same time as and later than Croce, present a still more radical critique of Hegel's philosophical theology. Bultmann defines (all, rather than just Hegel's) theological statements as anthropological statements 'in code'; their *real* object is entirely human. Tillich defines God as whatever is 'ultimate seriousness' in the experience of the believer. For Bultmann Hegel is an anthropologist who does not allow for the reality of God's having spoken and speaking uniquely through the person of Jesus (*3). For Tillich Hegel fails to resolve the existential problematic without acknowledging the impossibility of the project as such (*4). Karl Barth in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1919) attacks Hegelian philosophical theology because, in his understanding, it fails to acknowledge the transcendent nature of God and so runs the risk of identifying Christianity with a particular cultural tradition such as Protestantism or the European idea of freedom (*5). In his *Protestant Theology of the Nineteenth Century* (1972), Barth makes his critique of Hegel even more explicit. He asserts that Hegel's

dialectical logic, when applied to theology, makes it 'impossible for Hegel to grasp the true logic of Grace' (*6).

If the religious dimension in Hegel's thought has been relatively neglected in Hegel scholarship and only really addressed in the last thirty years, the same is true a fortiori of Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*. Even thinkers broadly sympathetic to Hegel's speculative theology have tended to underestimate the relevance of the early writings in relation to Hegel's system as a whole. For example, Malcolm Knox (whose own translation was the first English edition of the *Early Theological Writings* in 1946), argues in *A Layman's Quest* (London, 1969) that Hegel's mature religious thought does indeed reduce religion to philosophy and thus abandons the existential emphasis of the early works (*7). J. N. Findlay in *Hegel: A Reexamination* argues both that the *Early Theological Writings* are not significantly relevant to the later system and that Hegel's mature concept of Absolute Spirit is theological only in a metaphorical sense (*8). Emil Fackenheim, in *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (1967), a work concerned with the theological relevance of Hegel's thinking as

a whole, states explicitly that although "the Early Theological Writings are important for Hegel's intellectual development they add little to the understanding of his mature thought" (*9). Nevertheless, Fackenheim argues that Hegel's philosophy of Absolute Knowledge is ultimately intelligible only in theological terms. In the same vein, Gillian Rose in *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981), argues that Hegel's political and social philosophy is persuasive precisely because of its theological basis (*10). Rowan Williams in *Hegel and the Gods of Post Modernity* (1992), argues that Hegel's speculative theology does have within it a contemplative dimension and that this, as such, signals Hegel's awareness not only of the connection, but of the difference between philosophy and religious worship (*11).

Most recently (and most relevant to this present thesis) a group of writers has begun both to study the *Early Theological Writings* in greater detail and to take the arguments therein more seriously in relation to Hegel's later development. Raymond Plant in *Hegel: an Introduction* (1971) states his profound disagreement with Findlay's contention that these early writings

are of no decisive importance to the development of Hegel's thought as a whole. Plant draws attention to the specifically theological origin (exemplified in the essay *Faith and Knowledge* of 1801) of Hegel's concept of philosophy as a response to the need (*Bedürfnis*) implicit in the self-division (*Entzweiung*) in the Protestant culture of Germany in Hegel's time (*12). The self-division in question is the rift between theological consciousness and critical reason. However, Plant's emphasis is more on the later philosophy as a resolution of the problems implicit in the early writings; and less on the continuity in Hegel's central concerns in both groups of texts. Andrew Shanks in *Hegel's Political Theology* deals at some length with Hegel's early works, especially with their political and social relevance. For Shanks, Hegel's mature philosophy of religion grows out of a concern for the political and social implications of modern Protestantism as it is exemplified in the Lutheran Germany of his day. In Shanks' view, Hegel is principally concerned with the cultural just as much as the personal alienation implicit in modern Protestantism: a form of faith which legitimates itself by its own opposition to the rationality of

the secular world (*13). Hegel's diagnosis of the problem, according to Shanks, is already present in his early texts; but Hegel's solution is presented only in the mature philosophy of religion. For Shanks, Hegel's later work offers an 'inclusive Christology', designed to overcome the pietistic separation of the faithful from the world which he analyzes in his earlier work. Hegel's Christian reading of history, on Shanks' account, is indeed rooted in an authentic Christology. However it is also, and rightly, a philosophy of human history and of human culture as such. It is that philosophical and cultural focus which changes Hegel's thought from the esoteric theology of a sect into a philosophical theology valid outside the time and culture in which it was written. Shanks' emphasis is very much upon Hegel's later work, and Hegel's early writings are relevant only because his mature system overcomes the theological and cultural contradictions which Hegel has earlier exposed (*14). Counter to this, John Milbank argues, in *Theology and Social Theory*, that Hegel's later philosophical theology cannot offer a Christian political ethic of any modern relevance; and that it cannot do so precisely because it evades rather than really

resolves the tension between Christian faith and political citizenship which is outlined in Hegel's earlier work. For Milbank, Hegel's later thought fails to address this issue at all. Instead, it replaces the problem with another one; Hegel's theological thought has become a philosophy of European culture which, in his mature writings, masquerades as a Christology (*15).

By contrast, this thesis both stresses the continuity in Hegel's theological concerns and argues that Hegel's later religious thought continues to articulate, not speculatively evade, the tension between Christian experience and secular reason which is anatomized in his earlier work. Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* are thus necessary for any adequate understanding of Hegel's religious thought as a whole. The key problem of Hegel's early theology, I will argue, is the relationship between Positivity (the historically contingent form of Christian practice and belief) and Inwardness (the inner apprehension of such belief by the Christian believer). The same problem is explored in Hegel's later philosophical writings, but in his mature

philosophy of religion it is reformulated as a specifically philosophical problem with a specifically philosophical solution. Hegel conceives of philosophy as the most self-conscious mode of human knowledge and experience, as the only mode of consciousness which can heal the self-division implicit in the theological culture of his time. Yet Hegel's mature philosophy of religion also includes an account of the difference, as well as the relationship, between Christian experience and philosophical reflection. Hegel's mature religious thought can thus be defended against the charge that it ignores or falsifies the "existential" truth of Christian experience, such that Hegel's philosophical response adequately addresses the antinomies of the *Early Theological Writings* even if it cannot fully resolve them all.

It is to be argued too that Hegel's understanding of the specific importance of philosophy as a mode of human knowledge emerges in response to the theological problem posed in the early writings, and especially from his critical engagement with the thought of Kant. Thus the idea of Spirit, as set down in the

Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate as a resolution of the problem of "inwardness" and "positivity" in Christian belief, already foreshadows the idea of Spirit which plays such a central role in Hegel's mature religious thought and in the whole speculative philosophy. Hegel's account, in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay and in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* of the cultural need for philosophy in his time, is a direct response to the self-division in theological consciousness which he analyzes in the *Early Writings*. His account of the relationship between philosophy and religion in the *Philosophy of Religion* itself is predicated in the Trinity, which directly address the problems at the heart of Hegel's early theological work. Thus these problems shape the development of the later religious works beyond the starting point outlined in the earlier ones.

Hegel's later thought, I will argue, is vindicated not only by the manner in which philosophy in the Hegelian mode can fruitfully contribute to Christian theology, but also in that it does justice to the necessary difference between philosophical idealism and (Christian) religious experience. Indeed, Hegel's philosophical

theology continues to be relevant precisely because it explores the dimensions and the significance of that difference. One of the difficulties raised in writing this thesis is that whilst Hegel's 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is specifically philosophical in idiom and coherently related to the structure of his mature system as a whole, his use of language in the *Early Theological Writings* is part historical and part theological in kind. Hegel's formal philosophical terminology is thus directly relevant to the exposition of his later texts but only obliquely so to his earlier ones.

Chapter I undertakes a detailed reading of Hegel's key early texts, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* and *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate.*

Chapter II deals first with the emergence of Hegel's understanding of the "need" for philosophy as a response to the self-division in the experience of his time. The terms 'need' (*Bedürfnis*) and 'self-division' (*Entzweiung*) are Hegel's own. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with Hegel's mature

philosophy of religion. After an account of the transition in Hegel's thinking between the stages of his philosophical development as represented in his *Early Theological Writings* and in the 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and as represented in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay, there follows an account of his concepts of Spirit and of Absolute Spirit in the mature system. The chapter then moves to a detailed analysis of Hegel's Christology and shows that his mature theology of the incarnation is a response to the concerns of his early theological work.

A brief conclusion draws together the lines of argument from the thesis as a whole, relating Hegel's mature position to the historical development which has been traced throughout the thesis. My exposition will thus, of necessity, be both historiographical and conceptual; and the emphasis will change accordingly at different stages throughout. I will attempt to signal such changes as clearly as is practicable.

Chapter I

The *Early Theological Writings*

In this chapter will be outlined the formulation of the problem of subjectivity as set forth in Hegel's examination of positivity in the Jewish and Christian religions in his early theological writings. Hegel's understanding of Jesus' critique of Judaism comes eventually (in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*) to be replicated in his own critique of Kant. Judaism, Hegel maintains, identifies religion with the Positive (objective and historical) to the exclusion of the subjective experience of religious truth. This identification, which Hegel understands to have been one of Jesus' chief objections to the religious life of those whom he encountered, is repeated by Kant in his reduction of religion to morality. Hegel's early writings mark a transition in Hegel's thought, illustrated in the divergent attitudes to the role of morality in religion. I will use the German words *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, the first referring to the moral choices of an individual self, the second – commonly rendered

into English as 'ethical life' – referring to that ethical life as manifest in such an individual's community or culture, in order better to clarify the distinctions which Hegel draws in regard to religion and morality and which he believes Kant to have neglected entirely. Initially, Hegel constructs the problem of human subjectivity in theological rather than philosophical terms, exploring the relation of freedom and human reason to the Positive as manifest in historically existing forms of human (religious) belief. It will be demonstrated how this early account of human subjectivity in essentially theological terms prefigures later accounts of Geist in the more mature philosophical system.

The transition in the *Early Theological Writings*, from *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (1797) to *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* (1800), is especially interesting in terms of Hegel's intellectual development, as it highlights his rejection of the Kantian Ethics immediately after having endorsed the same through his account of Jesus of Nazareth as the embodiment of the Kantian credo. This analysis of the *Early Theological Writings* will only deal in any depth with the essays: *The Positivity of the*

Christian Religion and *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*. There is also an important transition from an hostility, in the first of these essays, to all historically embodied religion to a more mature understanding of the Positive as a necessary stage in the development of religious consciousness in the second. Hegel articulates this development in terms of *Geist* (spirit) and *Schicksal* (fate) and the role of each of these respectively in constituting and limiting human freedom.

(i) *Volksreligion*

Hegel, like Herder before him, had a very strong sense of the German Reformation's incompleteness. Those who came after Luther and who claimed to have inherited Luther's task, had signally failed in their attempt to establish a single unified Protestant church, even for the German-speaking world. This failure was a source of some profound regret for both Herder and Hegel alike, each of whom imagined the creation (or, in Herder's case, re-establishment) of *Volksreligion* as the yet unachieved goal towards which German society (and for Hegel

all Christendom) should strive. Herder maintained, in his identification of *Volksreligion* with a pan-Germanic culture, that the failure of Luther's successors was a failure to enable Christianity to encompass the German folkloric tradition: it had, he believed, usurped it. Herder's achievement included his formulation of historical evolution as the advancement of individuals and communities through adaptation over time to environmental factors; an idea which was to prove enormously influential upon the young Hegel. However, such influence was somewhat paradoxical: Herder's literary movement (later called by the name '*Sturm und Drang*') was a pre-Romantic reaction to the neo-classicist formalism epitomized in eighteenth century Germany by Winkelmann and his school. Paradoxical because, long after the influence of neo-classicism in German cultural life may be said to have peaked, it was precisely to a real or imagined ancient Greece, rather than to an almost entirely imagined ancient Germany, that Hegel turned for his own model of *Volksreligion*. For Hegel, Herder's ancient German model was not only exclusive of all non-Protestant Christendom, but of all non-German Protestant Christendom too; whereas he saw the

Hellenic world as the inspiration for his own idea of *Volksreligion*. This view of *Volksreligion* is first expounded in his eulogy of Socratic Athens, *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*: the Spirit is seen as the source of individual and communal identity.

In *The Life of Jesus*, the very earliest of his *Early Theological Writings*, Hegel had already contrasted Christianity, both historical and contemporary and very much to its own detriment, with the religious life of ancient Greece (*1). He argues that the former, for example, teaches a belief in the efficacy of prayer, the intercession of a supernatural and external deity in the disordered affairs of men; whilst the latter epitomizes a harmony between the social and the ethical. He contrasts Greek religious and social life, united as something entire of itself, with Christianity, divided against itself, in which people look beyond the world as they experience it to a distant and supernatural God. For Hegel, at this point, Christianity is a religion of people who are in the world but not of it; the world is a place of struggle for redemption, but the source and object of redemption is always beyond the world. Even for such an early work there is

an attempt to clarify the problem of human subjectivity which he believed to constitute the crisis in contemporary Protestant theology. Very broadly, there is a tension between 'inwardness' and the need for a positive articulation of the content of Christian belief. The one, inheriting the Lutheran theological tradition, refers to the belief that all individuals must experience for themselves the reality of salvation, which is conceived of as radically independent of any ecclesiastical structure; the other, essential to any socially embodied religious practice, cannot be reduced to the private experience of the individual. It is with the problem of positivity and inwardness, namely that of how to reconcile the existential authenticity with the cultural objectivity of Christian belief, and with the responses to it in the intellectual life of the Germany of his time, that Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* are concerned.

THE POSITIVITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

(ii) Protestantism and Inwardness

T. M. Knox prefaces his translation of Hegel's *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* with the note:

"Hegel's surviving manuscript begins here and its original exordium is lost. It probably dealt with the concept of Positivity" (PCR 67 *et seq.*). In the absence of Hegel's own introduction it is necessary to derive his conception of Positivity from his later exposition in the same work. Hegel, at this stage, means by the positivity of the Christian religion three things: the objectively existing institutions and practice of the Christian religion; the commonly and explicitly articulated form of Christian doctrine, which defines the Church as a community of believers; and the Church as a social and therefore implicitly political entity, existing alongside and interacting with the secular expression of human society. The problem of positivity and inwardness arises in a particularly acute form for Hegel because of his commitment to the Lutheran tradition. For the Catholic believer, faith is

intrinsically social and the spiritual life of the individual is *necessarily* mediated by the believer's participation in the Body of Christ which is the Church. For the Anglican, a range of different understandings of justification and of the Church are reconciled both by the legal establishment of the Anglican Communion and by the inclusive character of the sixteenth century theological settlement, the Thirty-nine Articles. However, for the Lutheran the key doctrine is that of justification by faith alone. The Lutheran doctrine of the Church, and of the relationship between Church and State, is necessarily secondary. For Lutheranism, the problem of positivity and inwardness is thus the problem of how any socially and historically objective mode of Christian belief can exist without falsifying the truth of inner experience; and how that inner experience can be reconciled to the idea of a Christian community, so that there are not as many different forms of Christianity as there are individual Christians.

As Hegel writes:

"You may advance the most contradictory speculations about the Christian religion but no matter what they be, numerous voices are always raised against you, alleging that what you maintain may touch on this or that system of the Christian religion but not on the Christian religion itself. Everyone sets up his own system as the Christian religion and requires everyone else to envisage this, and this only" (PCR 67).

Hegel in his *Early Theological Writings* seeks to demonstrate the need for the Positive in some form or another, in order to counter the lapse of individuals into self-defeating inwardness and so to restore a real sense of community to church congregations. However, quite in what the Positive should consist is problematic, because there is, in modern Protestant Europe, no longer any ground which can authoritatively validate the claim of any particular religious persuasion to constitute the Positive.

Hegel's conceptual analysis of the problem of inwardness and positivity is also a cultural and an historical critique of modern Christianity and, more specifically, of modern Protestantism.

Hegel commits himself unambiguously to the principles of the religious autonomy of the individual and of the full engagement of the Christian in the secular world which have been central to the Lutheran tradition since the Reformation. Yet he is equally and acutely aware that the development of Protestant Christianity in his time has led neither to rational autonomy in its adherents nor to their reconciliation with the claims of the modern secular world. The questions which Hegel asks in his *Early Theological Writings* are: how and why does the objective existence of the Christian religion become not a means, but an obstacle to the true expression of the Christian faith? How and why does Christianity become a 'positive' religion in precisely the sense of that Pharisaic idolatry from which Christ sought to liberate humanity?

The Pharisees first claimed, then established and finally abused, authority in matters of law. The religious communities of the early Christian Church were communities in a very real sense, as opposed to the notional sense of community which had come to characterize Judaism at the time of Jesus. Only some time

after the patristic period did the Church become big and powerful enough for its real sense of community to be similarly threatened or abused. By Luther's time, the Church was, in Hegel's view, largely the embodiment of an oppressive dogmatic framework which pandered to, rather than swept away, superstition and ignorance at every level within a Christian community which now lacked any real sense of common identity.

Hegel, in his early works, is thus concerned with a problem which arises both from the structure of Lutheran theology and from the history of Lutheran Christianity. He is also concerned with how that problem is given particular urgency by both the philosophical discourse and the general culture of his time and place. It is his engagement with that culture and philosophical discourse which will now be addressed.

(iii) Positivity in Judaism and Kantian Ethics

German distinguishes between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, the former referring to the moral choice and responsibility of an individual, and the latter to social ethical norms, perhaps even those specific to a particular cultural tradition. This distinction is useful as an illustration of first, the positivity of the Jewish religion as Hegel finds it described in scripture, and secondly, of what he understands in this text to be the content and force of Kant's moral philosophy. It is important to note that Hegel himself made no such discriminatory use of the terms *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* until he wrote the lectures in 1820 which eventually became the *Berlin Encyclopaedia* (*2). However, the contrast which these terms are here used to illustrate is, nevertheless, made implicitly even at this early stage. Henceforth, I shall use these terms as a means of distinguishing between the personal moral responsibility of an individual, and the moral norms and customs of the society to which that individual belongs and from which that same individual may, or may not, derive the evaluative criteria which inform personal

moral choices. Hegel maintains that there is a potential for conflict between the moral values of the community and those of any member of such a community. He argues that Biblical Judaism (and I shall later argue Kantian ethics) lacks the conceptual resources to understand such a conflict (PCR 75 – 77).

Positivity and Judaism

Before turning to the Kantian ethics and Hegel's critique thereof, Hegel's account of positivity in Judaism must be outlined in order to establish a contextual framework for that critique. Judaism at the time of Jesus was dominated in its canonic legislature by the Pharisaic party. The importance of the law of Moses and its interpretation into a practicable rubric was accepted at that time by all religious Jews. However, Pharisaism, in these troubled times of Roman occupation, took interpretation of the law to gross extremes, judged by all hitherto accepted standards of practicability. Jesus' own reported words: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath", for example, illustrate reaction to such extremes.

The *Sittlichkeit* sense of moral law (which is, whether incidentally or not, at the heart of the Mosaic law), is not only at all times held to be superior to the moral choice in the sense of *Moralität*, but has, in Hegel's view, extinguished it altogether. The law has been turned into an end in itself rather than being a means to higher moral ends. The power of Judaic legalism held authority through fear – either of judicially enforced punishment here and now for the lack of obedience to the law or, compounded by prevalent superstitions based upon ignorance of what lies beyond death, of retribution hereafter. The Pharisees in particular made use of this latter notion, having themselves introduced into Judaism for the first time a belief in a life after death. The word of God cannot be justified but nor can it be questioned. Freedom of moral choice, then, either played no part at all in the life of the community – which amounted to a denial of moral autonomy – or it simply did not coincide to any but an incidental (rather than a willed) degree with the ethical life of the community. Hegel refers to the 'mechanical slavery' of the members of such a community and writes:

"And nothing but pride in this slavish obedience to laws not laid down by themselves was left of the Jewish spirit which already was deeply mortified and embittered by the subjection of the state to a foreign power" (PCR 68).

However, he stresses that it was not the law itself which was at fault but rather the legalistic application of it by the Pharisees (and others of the same mentality) in a nigh unworkable manner to every dimension of life. Indeed, he writes of Jesus with regard to the 'sacred books' of the Jews:

"Jesus found the highest moral principles there – he did not set up new ones. With Matthew Ch 22 v.37 'Thou shalt love the Lord they God with all thy heart', compare Deuteronomy Ch 6 v.5 which reads: 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might'. He also compares strictures of the Mosaic law from Leviticus with Matthew Ch7 v.12: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them', it would have been remarkable indeed if a religion like the Jewish, which had made God as political legislator, had not also contained purely moral principles" (PCR 70).

Of Jesus he writes:

"He undertook to raise religion and virtue to morality and to restore to morality the freedom which is its essence" (PCR 69).

To enable the positivity of the Jewish religion to be restored to what it had been before the Pharisaic reduction of it to 'mechanical slavery', it is essential for the individual community member to have moral freedom in electing the values prescribed by the *Sittlichkeit*. That freedom, by the exercise of the individual's own 'good will', must make those values that individual's own.

For Hegel, there is a close analogy between the condition of the Jewish people at the time of Christ and that of Protestant Germany at the time in which he was writing. The early Christians were faced with a conflict between the written law of Judaism and the spirit of moral freedom within them. German Christians at the end of the eighteenth century are faced with a similar opposition between the 'positive', that is, historically

existing and transmitted, form of the Christian faith and the desire for a living faith which their consciousness of the cultural sterility of the Christian tradition in their time and nation has aroused in them.

The source of Hegel's analogy between Pharisaic Judaism and modern Protestantism is his analysis of how the Protestant Christianity of his time has come to be positive in a damaging sense: that is, how the external forms of Christian practice have come to be dissociated from the living spirit of Christian faith. As Hegel puts it:

"The special characteristic of the Jewish religion – that bondage to law from which Christians so heartily congratulate themselves on being free – turns up once more in the Christian Church" (PCR 139).

For Hegel, this development has two main sources: the separation of Christian practice and feeling from the rest of human life in society, and the separation of religious consciousness from secular intellectual life. Hegel traces both of these developments to the tendency in modern Protestantism

to constitute not only a private society but a kind of ecclesiastical state opposed to the secular power (PCR 135). Protestantism enjoins its adherents to participate fully in the secular world, but it does so on terms which imply opposition to secular morality and reason. The result is the spiritual alienation of a religion which declares spiritual truth to be alien to natural reason and accessible only to pious feeling: a state of inner conviction which is necessary for salvation and yet wholly beyond the individual's command:

"The main difference between Jews and Christians comes to this: that while, in Judaism, only actions were commanded, the Christian Church goes further and commands feelings, a contradiction in terms" (PCR 140).

However, because modern Protestantism allows for no real difference between the spheres of religious and secular life, the modern Protestant Christian is forced into a life less of hypocrisy than of self-deception:

"In trade and commerce the ordinary man appears, but he is a different person altogether on Sundays or under the eyes of his co-religionists or in reading his prayer-book. To charge a man like this with hypocrisy is often too harsh, because hypocrisy strictly entails consciousness of the contradiction between the label given to it and the motives behind it; in this instance this consciousness is altogether lacking, and the man is not a unity at all" (PCR 141).

The effect is a religion of command, not participation; of passivity, not activity (v. PCR 137). To be sure, modern Protestantism, unlike Judaism, is primarily a culture of inward feeling, not outward ritual observance. Protestantism is nevertheless as positive as Judaism, because its injunctions take precedence over the subjectivity of its adherents:

"One leading trait in the Church's moral system is its erection on religion and our dependence upon the deity. Its foundation is not a datum of our minds, a proposition which could be developed out of our own consciousness, but rather something learned. On this view, morality is not a self-subsistent science

or one with independent principles; neither is the essence of morality grounded on freedom, i.e. it is not the autonomy of the will" (PCR 135).

Thus, the Christian Church becomes destructively positive when the will and consciousness of its members become heteronomous: when they are divided against themselves. This is the point at which Kantian thought becomes relevant to Hegel's theological critique. For Hegel in 1797, Kant's moral philosophy promises a great deal. It does so because it is about the autonomy of human reason as a guide to conduct, and yet also about the autonomy of faith and the difference between the secular and the spiritual domains. Kant argues (3*) that rational autonomy is not just compatible with, but the only legitimate source of, moral conduct. However, he also argues that, whilst reason can describe the conditions which must be fulfilled if such conduct is to be possible, it cannot describe how such conduct *really is* possible. Reason, according to Kant, cannot explain the mystery of moral motivation; it must give way to faith.

Kant's philosophy is thus directly relevant to the theological predicament which Hegel outlines in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*. In this early essay Hegel refers directly to Kant only in a few pages and in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* (1800) at only slightly greater length. However, I will attempt to show that Kant is the implicit philosophical interlocutor throughout Hegel's early works, and that his engagement with Kant is one of the most important sources of the development of his position from 1797 to 1800 and beyond.

Before arguing this case with detailed reference to Hegel's own text I shall first present a brief account of Kant's moral philosophy on its own terms, basing my exposition upon Kant's argument in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, the most concise formulation of Kant's ethical thought. I will then turn to Hegel's critique of Kant's moral philosophy as set out in his Early Theological Writings. It should be noted that this later section is purely expository and I make no claim to its offering an independent analysis or assessment of Kant's ethical thought. It should also be noted that Hegel's discussion of Kant

in the *Early Theological Writings* is often oblique and rarely refers directly to Kant's texts. My use of the *Groundwork* is therefore intended only to provide a point of reference for the later examination of Hegel's criticism of Kant; it is not meant to imply that this is the text upon which Hegel based his own critique.

Kant's moral philosophy rests upon a deontology or 'theory of obligation'. It is tightly constructed out of the interrelated concepts of duty, law, the categorical imperative (as opposed to hypothetical imperatives) and the belief that the only wholly good thing in the world is the good (because truly autonomous) will. For Kant, to be moral (that is, to act morally) is to be free and to be free is to be determined by one's rational will. To be determined in any other way, whether by the command of another or by one's own unexamined feelings, is to be unfree through being in bondage to a motivation external (heteronomous) to one's rational self. That one is surrounded by such motivations does not absolve one of the 'duty' to strive for the good in opposition to instinct; one must subordinate one's desires to the greater moral good, in whatever that end might consist (*4).

Kant maintained that the universalisability of a particular moral choice was its justification. If what one chooses to do is not only right for one here and now, by whatever criteria one might choose, but is also right for anyone at any time under the same conditions of action, then it is a moral action. For Kant, the key principle of morality, the categorical imperative, involves both a formula of autonomy and a formula of universalisable law (*5). The two formulae are closely connected, for Kant requires not only that moral agents should act in accordance with a law valid for all rational beings, but also that they "ought never to act except in such a way that (they) can also will that (their) maxim should become a universal law" (*6). Kant's distinction between a law and a maxim is important, because it distinguishes between the rational content of an act and the inner disposition which prompts it. One is enjoined to act not just in accordance with the moral law, but for the sake of it. It is not, therefore, morally right to act in accordance with the moral law because of a desire for approbation, or from a fear of censure, according to the cultural norms of a particular society, however enlightened those norms may be (*7). In the Kantian view, rationality,

autonomy and universalizability are indissolubly connected and form the basis of the moral law. One must act rationally because one must act in conformity with a rationally justified moral law. One must act autonomously because one must be prompted to act only by one's reverence for the law itself (*8). In order so to act, one must regard oneself only as a member of a community of rational beings, not as a particular person with particular interests (*9).

This conception of moral freedom raises acutely the problem of the context and motivation for moral conduct. Kant himself explicitly acknowledges that his explanatory framework cannot adequately explain how the categorical imperative can be practicably enacted. Kant's concept of moral freedom, like his concepts of God and immortality, is a regulative ideal: that is, an ideal which can be conceived of only analogically, not substantively, because its content hints at something beyond the sphere of human experience. One has to think as if the categorical imperative could directly motivate conduct, even if one can never know how it does so. One must act for the sake

of the moral law, but one must never know that one is so acting. He writes at the conclusion of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* that:

"We do not comprehend the practical unconditioned necessity of the moral imperative, we do comprehend its incomprehensibility" (*10).

The problem with which Kant leaves his readers, is that of how reverence for a pure idea is to motivate action; and it is in this context that the theological relevance of Kant's moral philosophy becomes most apparent. Kant thus interprets the scriptural injunction to *love* your *enemies* as a commandment to kindness done from duty, because 'love out of inclination cannot be commanded' (*11). For Kant, ethical love is 'practical, not pathological ... residing in the will and not in the propensions of feeling'. Again, Kant's insistence that morality must be derived from *a priori* reasoning and not from the study of examples leads him to assert that 'even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognise him to be such' (*12). Thus Kant gestures towards a

doctrine of grace (or of what he calls the 'blessed will') only via an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of the idea of duty as a moral motivation for conduct; and towards the Incarnation only as the symbol of a moral perfection which can otherwise be described in wholly secular terms.

Kant's moral philosophy is intellectually persuasive for the same reason that it is limited in its power of explanation. Kant expounds with great clarity the formal conditions which would have to be satisfied by free and rational conduct as he understands it. However, he cannot explain (as he freely acknowledges) how this conduct is possible. That limitation in Kant's thought is the necessary consequence of its greatest strength: namely, that it refuses to conceive of ethics in either cultural or psychological terms. He seeks to replace those terms with a priori philosophical ones; when he is unable so to do he is forced to have recourse to a negative dialectic which is implicitly a negative theology: one which comprehends the incomprehensibility of human ethical life.

Hegel's critique of Kant shall now be examined. Hegel's brief explicit discussion of Kant in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* suggests that he sees Kant's moral philosophy as a potential solution to the theological problem which he (Hegel), expounds. In that essay Hegel writes:

"The fundamental error at the bottom of a church's entire system is that it ignores the rights pertaining to every faculty of the human mind, in particular to the chief of them, reason. Once the church's system ignores reason, it can be nothing save a system which despises man. The powers of the human mind have a domain of their own, and this domain is separated off for science by Kant. This salutary separation has not been made by the church in its legislating activity" (PCR 143).

Yet, as Hegel's subsequent exposition makes clear, the Kantian argument is ambiguous in its theological import. The very distinction which Kant makes between the necessary condition and the efficient cause of a moral act opens up a further theological difficulty. For Protestant theology does claim to be

concerned with the real motivation of human action. Both Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines claim that believers can discern such motivation in themselves. The Kantian disjunction between the formal principle of action and its voluntary origin can, therefore, accentuate rather than overcome that opposition of spiritual to secular consciousness which Protestant Christianity seems to require:

"Reason sets up moral, necessary, and universally valid laws; Kant calls these 'objective' ... Now the problem is to make these laws subjective, to make them into maxims, to find motives for them; and the attempts to solve this problem are infinitely diverse ... The sole moral motive, respect for the moral law can be aroused only in a subject in whom the law is in itself the legislator, from whose own inner consciousness the law proceeds. But the Christian religion proclaims that the moral law is something outside us and something given, and thus it must strive to create respect for it in some other way" (PCR 143 – 144).

In *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, Hegel directly relates this problem, which is exactly the problem of human subjectivity as conceived by Hegel's early religious thought, to the philosophy of Kant. The problem, and the inadequacy of the Kantian standpoint as a response to it, derives from the destructively positive element in Christianity which Hegel perceives in the religious life of his time. That destructive element is precisely the belief that "the moral law is something outside us and something given". In 1797 Hegel describes this as a belief which the Christian religion proclaims. He also implicitly criticises that belief, but at this stage he has no fully coherent conception of a Christianity free of the moral and intellectual heteronomy which he describes. Such a Christianity would certainly have some positive elements; but they would be a vehicle for, not an obstacle to, the free expression of inner commitment. At this stage, Hegel at most only hints at such a creative alternative to the impoverished Christian life of his time; he never delineates its real content. For the same reason, Hegel's appeal to Kantian thought has more a negative than a constructive function; it evokes the idea of a reconciliation between social and

intellectual freedom and Christian commitment, but offers no means of bringing such reconciliation into being. Hegel defines the problem of human subjectivity in specifically theological terms:

" ... the Christian church has taken the subjective element in reason and set it up as a rule as if it were something objective" (PCR 143).

For Hegel, at this stage, Kant adequately describes this situation but can offer no means of resolving it. Indeed, the effect of Kant's philosophy on the consciousness of philosophically educated believers may well be to compound their sense of alienation. If we make Hegel's implicit philosophical critique of Kant explicit, the problem with Kant's categorical imperative is that it is a regulative ideal and not a constitutive truth. It points to the law of what ought to be, but offers no clue as to how the law is to be realized in experience. The incapacity of the Kantian framework to offer Hegel, at this stage, a satisfactory resolution of the theological crisis of his time derives especially from its failure to perceive any enabling role for positivity in religious

life. The Kantian ethic, because of its self-confessed inability to describe the means to its own embodiment, leaves the false embodiment (the dead ritual and reified doctrine) of Christian faith in place. Indeed, that ethic also engenders an 'unhappy consciousness' which yearns for fulfilment in the ideal realm of the philosophical imagination. For that reason, the Kantian ethic runs the risk of becoming destructively positive itself: of setting up commandments which no one on Earth can fulfil and thus dividing the consciousness of humanity in two.

There is a parallel between Hegel's critique of Judaism (and of the positive Christianity of his time which he sees as Judaism's modern successor) and his critique of Kant. It is apparent, if only implicitly at this stage, that Hegel regards the Kantian scheme as inadequate to the task of responding to the problem of Protestantism and inwardness in the culture of his time. Pharisaic Judaism, according to Hegel, was destructively positive because its *Sittlichkeit* utterly excluded *Moralität*. Thus, its public practice was only an external and historical phenomenon. For Hegel then, in Judaism the socially embodied

moral code was 'positive' because it was not the product of the self-conscious moral and intellectual life, or 'subjectivity', of the Jewish people. Counter to this, the Kantian ethic internalizes the positive by allowing *Moralität* to eclipse *Sittlichkeit*. If Judaism neglects the sphere of human subjectivity entirely, Kantianism entirely neglects the context in which that subjectivity has to be made real. For Judaism, the cultural is the ethical: it is concrete, external, objective and historical. In Kantianism, the moral law has become abstracted from any social or cultural context and yet is absolute in its demands. Kant is a philosopher of human subjectivity *par excellence*: a philosopher for whom human self-knowledge is the key to human freedom, and human freedom the key to ethical truth. Yet the problem for Kant's disciples is precisely, in Hegel's words, 'to make the laws subjective': to connect the formal imperative of the moral law to the particularity of their experience.

Through his engagement with Kant, Hegel comes to see that any mode of ethical thought which shuns cultural embodiment may be just as destructively 'positive' as one which uncritically

accepts a particular cultural form. The problem is not whether, but how, human subjectivity is to be expressed in the cultural and religious traditions of humankind: how the inescapable positivity of human culture can enable, not threaten, the realization of human freedom. In the terms of Hegel's argument, the problem is one of how a living, and philosophically informed, Christian faith is to come to terms with the positive, historically real, forms of Christian belief. In the next section I will consider in more detail Hegel's understanding of the role of the Positive in Christian belief.

(iv) Positivity and Christianity

Hegel establishes that there is indeed a role in religion for the Positive, which he sees Jesus in the scriptures attempting to re-establish amongst the Jews, in place of an abuse of the Positive which renders their religion idolatrous rather than moral. Hegel outlines what he considers to be two false understandings of positivity in the Christian theology of his time:

"Against this view that the teaching of Jesus is not Positive at all, that he did not wish to base anything on his authority, two parties raise their voices. They agree in maintaining that while the (Christian) religion of course contains principles of virtue it also contains positive prescriptions for acquiring God's favour by exercising feelings and actions rather than by morality" (PCR 71).

The two parties to which Hegel here refers are the 'philosophical' and the 'positive' (PCR 74 – 75). The 'philosophical' party wishes to eliminate the positive element from Christianity altogether, replacing it with the *a priori* principles of pure reason. The 'positive' party wants to replace unexamined doctrine and mechanical practice with the supposedly authentic positivity of the person and authority of Christ. These two positions, Hegel suggests (PCR 67f *et seq.*), are often taken by the philosophical enemies of Christianity as an appropriate target because they remove from Christian doctrine any determinate, and thus publicly articulable, content which could not be independently derived from natural reason. Hegel acknowledges that such a critique is objectively true of much religious practice, but argues

that the critics are mistaken in taking a spiritually dead, because mechanistic, religious practice to be identical with any positively embodied form of Christian faith.

The Positive, according to Hegel, cannot be removed altogether from religion without the consequent 'inwardness' leading to a nihilistic solipsism. The extremism of the 'philosophical' and 'positive' parties suggests to Hegel that:

"Between these two kinds of sects (philosophical and positive) we might place a third which accepts the Positive principle of faith in a knowledge of duty and God's will, regarding it as sacred and making it a basis of faith but holds that it is the commands of virtue which are essential in the faith, not the practices it orders or the positive doctrine it enjoins or may entail" (PCR 75).

A belief in an objective ethics outside the bounds of religion, perhaps one of the principles of which remain as yet unknown, is never ruled out, but Hegel is not at this stage primarily concerned with the secular world. He argues that, if the content

of the perfect morality cannot as yet be identified, then the content of the positive must be chosen arbitrarily and there is, therefore, no rational foundation for actions based upon it. As an instance of the positivity of the Christian religion Hegel cites miracles (of which he had purged his own earlier account of the gospel stories in *The Life of Jesus*) or rather the belief in miracles by the credulous, as a token of the abuse of power and authority in the Christian Church:

"Nothing has contributed so much as these miracles to make the religion of Jesus positive; to basing the whole of it, even his teaching about virtue, on authority" (PCR 78).

Hegel cites other such instances of positivity in Christianity and compares the Christian religion with Judaism:

" ...Just as the Jews made sacrifices, ceremonies and a compulsory faith into the essence of religion, so the Christians made its essence consist in lip-service, external actions, inner-feelings and an historical faith" (PCR 79 *et seq.*).

In Judaism, *Sittlichkeit* had all but extinguished *Moralität*. In Christianity, any move to reform by revitalising the moral freedom, the *Moralität*, of the hitherto subjected individual presents itself as a problem. The moral agency of individuals can be exercised only in their interrelations: there must be some *real* social and cultural content to the moral law. Whence is this content to come? Hegel describes the plight of an individual struggling to reconcile a new-found sense of moral choice with the loss of faith in a moral code which had hitherto never been questioned:

" ... The source of morality has been wholly renounced by the man who has subjected himself to the law only when compelled by fear of his lord's punishment. Hence, when he is deprived of the theoretical faith in this power on which he is dependent, he is like an emancipated slave and knows no law at all. The law whose yoke he bore was not given by himself, by his reasons, since he could not regard his reason as free – as a master – but only as a servant".

In a footnote to the same:

"This is why the loss of a purely positive religion so often has immorality as its result. If the faith was a purely positive one then the responsibility for this result lies directly with the positive faith – not with the loss of it" (PCR 80).

(v) Church and State

Hegel fully supports the condemnation (at the Reformation) of the Church for having become a political power in society, rather than a radical one in the gospel tradition, which cares for the poor and the outcasts of society. The Church had become the establishment rather than the establishment's critic. The gospel teaching that all are equal before God has been rendered 'all are equal before God, but not in this life', and the sale by the Church of indulgences and the wealth of the mediaeval monasteries testify to this. However, Luther's good intentions had not really borne fruit in the subsequent history of Protestantism. The 'bad' (because mechanical) Positivity once manifest in Church iconography and liturgy has been internalized in the submission

of each member of the Church community to the law of his heart. Moreover, the Protestant churches have themselves become established in particular societies in just the same way as had the Catholic Church which they sought to replace. Hegel refers to Spanish Catholic missionaries in South America and to the Inquisition (both historically and in the present); and compares Catholic with Protestant, each in his respective practice of depriving the unconverted of their civil rights in the mistaken if sincere belief that it is his duty so to do. For Hegel, legal rights are the embodiment in law of rights which he believes go hand-in-hand with moral responsibility. Moral duties and legal rights balance one another:

"Justice depends on my respecting the rights of others; it is a virtue if I regard it as a duty and make it the maxim of my actions, not because the State so requires but simply because it is a duty and in that event is a requirement of the moral law not of the State" (PCR 96).

Hegel considers this to be true irrespective of any particular religious tradition, but religion can engender an attitude of mind within the State which cannot be legislated for, but which may stimulate and accompany the making of rational and humane public law. The moral law completes the civil law, and vice versa.

For Hegel, one of the most important achievements of the French revolution was to establish the rights of free secular reason against the Roman Catholic Church, then very much a temporal power in its own right and allied to the secular power of the French monarchy. However, he is acutely conscious that he is writing in Lutheran Germany. Protestantism, unlike Catholicism, argues that there is an explicitly Christian rationale for the full participation of the believer in the secular state. For Protestant Germany, therefore, the problem for political theology derives from the proximity of church to state, not the distance between them. For Lutheran orthodoxy, as for Hegel, the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of this world is one between two very distinct yet compatible attitudes which Christians are enjoined to adopt in relation to

the whole of their experience. Luther's Christian freedom is entirely compatible with allegiance to the secular law, provided that that law guarantees freedom of religion.

The problem for Hegel's political theology at this stage is that, in the Lutheran Germany of his day, pietistic theology construes the Church as a sect (or a plurality of sects) only accidentally related to the secular polity in which they exist (v. PCR 142 – 145). However, Kantian moral philosophy prescribes universalisable principles of rational freedom. Those principles, even if they are compatible with membership of at least one such sect, cannot of themselves prescribe religious allegiance, nor mediate between any particular religious body and the state. The effect of this is that, in Hegel's Germany, there is both a conflict between church and state, and a conflict between pietistic faith and secular reason. The conflict is all the more intense because secular and theological consciousnesses, in the Protestant world, do not have separate spheres of action; they compete for the same such sphere (*13).

Hegel describes the consequences of this conflict in terms of the competing, and so mutually incompatible, loyalties of the modern Protestant individual:

"On the other hand, by entering the society of the positive Christian sect he has assumed the duty of obeying its statutes not because he has himself taken something for obligatory, good and useful, but because he has left the society to decide these matters and recognizes something as duty simply and solely at another's demand and another's judgement. He has accepted the duty of believing something and regarding it as true because the society has commanded belief in it whereas if I am convinced of a philosophical system I reserve the right to change my conviction if reason so requires" (PCR 100).

How, then, is this conflict to be resolved? The concluding section of *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* deals largely with Hegel's own formulation of provisions to ensure that the relationship of church to state avoids any conflict of interests.

However, Hegel's argument at this stage is inadequate to the task. The state is to be entrusted with authority, and religion is to be the safeguard against any abuse of that authority. If there is to be no established church, no State religion (which, in the light of the Church's role as guarantor of the State's non-abuse of authority, must be taken as given), then the problem of 'inwardness' in German Protestantism is accentuated rather than resolved. In the absence of a single State religion – in the interests of freedom – a plurality of religions (or of denominations within a single religion) might flourish, each one as legitimate as the other. If what constitutes the Positive, with regard to the content of the moral law, for one such religious group is indistinguishable from that of another, then what is there to choose between them? If otherwise, a conflict of interest between such groups, and a conflict about the basis for the role of the civil power as arbitrator, seems inevitable.

The notion of *Volksreligion* as the harmony of the social and the ethical is still the guiding influence in Hegel's thinking here as he explores necessary and practicable relations between Church and State. However, the role of any spiritual sense – which was

even present, if perhaps somewhat understated, in his exposition of the exemplary Hellenic world – has become even more vague in his account of religion in his ideal of modern society. Articles of faith are to be taken up by an individual on a contractual basis just as the protection granted to one under the laws of the State is conditional upon one's upholding them oneself: the social contract. The relationship of the individual to the internal or external Positive is the same.

In his reduction of religion to morality, Kant held the divine figure of Christ to be, in his moral perfection, a 'regulative ideal'. The moral life of Jesus of Nazareth is the ideal towards which all individuals must strive. For Kant, however, the ideal is incommensurate with the reality of human experience, being a goal never to be attained. For Hegel, by contrast, the regulative ideal is anathema because Jesus, even for Lutheran theology, was not 'man made God', but 'God made man'. The Incarnation means that the 'imitation of Christ' is a realizable, not an impossible, goal. Hegel defines the 'task' inherited from Luther thus:

" ... Great men have claimed that the fundamental meaning of Protestant is a man or a church which has not bound itself to certain unalterable standards of faith but which protests against all authority in matters of belief, against all engagements contradictory of that sacrosanct right" (PCR 128).

For Kant and Hegel alike, the rationality of the individual subject (the moral agent) is the key to that subject's freedom and hence to that subject's moral responsibility. For Hegel, however, the antithetical structure of Kant's ethical thought, the opposition it construes between duty and inclination, between the universal law and every contingent source of motivation in the moral agent, means that it is necessarily incapable of realizing its own ideal. Hegel argues that the subordination of inclination to the Kantian law is itself positive and counter to the moral freedom which is the defining characteristic of Protestantism. The theological consequence of that structure is a religion of unfulfilled desire: one which uses the Bible to describe, indeed even to sanction, its own inability to realize its longing in the world. The giving of the law by God to Moses was an historical

event, a happening in a particular place and at a particular time and so necessarily unchangeable. Its embodiment in the person of Christ is the unattainable ideal towards which it is our duty to strive, conscious of its unattainability.

In Hegel's subsequent work, the theological critique of Kant already implicit in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* will become explicit and give rise to a decisive shift in Hegel's own theology. For Hegel, the Revelation of the moral law must itself disclose the means by which humanity must make that law its own. The moral law cannot be made real in experience by rational introspection alone. The moral subject's rational freedom must be realized through engagement with the ethical life of the community. What that engagement means, both theologically and ethically, and what its real cost is to be, will be amongst the most important themes of Hegel's subsequent religious and ethical thought.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS FATE

(vi) Human Reason and Freedom

This text, *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, represents a significant new stage in the development of Hegel's theology. That is so, first, because Hegel for the first time seeks not just to describe but also to overcome the limitations of the Kantian position in relation to Christian theology; and, secondly, because Hegel develops a concept of Spirit which, albeit in very embryonic form, transcends the Kantian dualism and points towards the idea of historically embodied Spirit which informs Hegel's mature philosophy of religion.

Hegel's new and much more critical understanding of the significance of Kantian ethics is made clear by his comparison of the Kantian moral law within to the worship of an idol. Hegel recounts Kant's likely condemnation of the Siberian Shaman for bowing down to worship an idol. The Shaman, Hegel points out, has his idol outside himself; but the Kantian self-legislator, whilst believing himself to be absolutely free, has his idol inside himself.

"And between the Shaman ... on the one hand and the man who listens to his own command of duty on the other, the difference is not that the former make themselves slaves while the latter is free, but that the former have their lord outside themselves while the latter carries his lord in himself yet at the same time is his own slave" (SCF 266).

In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, Hegel argues that the objective positivity of the Mosaic Law does not dictate the criteria of its own rationality; perhaps it cannot do so because it is not of itself innately rational. Instead it is the individual subject's duty to use his own rationality to appropriate that positive law in his moral beliefs and actions. Thus the law is merely symbolic of the God who revealed it rather than being that which has God revealed within it. God remained alienated from the Jews for all that he had revealed himself to Moses. That Moses dies before the Jews entered the land of Israel is a pregnant and poignant reminder that the revelation to Moses as an historical event is long past. The Jews did not have God, but

only the law as positive object. Such an object determines those subject to it rather than their, subject and object, being mutually defining. Moreover, the Jews as a community react against, or act in accordance with, that law in their struggle to comprehend that which they have been given rather than that which they themselves have made. Thus, for Hegel, the Spirit of Judaism is not the mutual interaction of subject individuals but rather the whole of Jewry acting, or reacting as if they, the community, were a single such subject. Even if we were to circumvent the problem of the reality of God's revelation to Moses, by conceiving it as a metaphor by which those who set down the laws might ascribe divine authority to them, the fundamental belief in their having been so divinely revealed amounts to the same in the end. For all the erudition and inspired interpretation of the subsequent commentaries on the law, the positive in Judaism is something static, and rational justification of its contents as opposed to rational understanding of its strictures remains irrelevant. If it were not for the plurality of its own positive doctrines – and often their

mutual exclusivity – Christianity would be positive in just the same vein.

Hegel's critique of the dualism of the Kantian ethic, which was implicit in his earlier work, is now completely explicit, and explicitly theological in form. In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, Hegel characterizes the historical consequences in the life of the early Christian community of what he still sees as the self-division inherited from Judaism and implicit in Christian belief. What is new in this text is that he describes that self-division in terms of the historical destiny of the Christian Church, and in so doing goes beyond the moral and psychological emphasis of his earlier work. That historical analysis shall now be examined.

(vii) The Second Coming and Christian History

For the Apostles, the person of Jesus had indeed been immediate, concrete and thus historical. After the Ascension, wherein Christ was removed from them before their very eyes, they were conscious not so much of the presence of God but of

the absence of the Son of God. The eager anticipation amongst members of the early church of the imminent and historical return of Jesus Christ turned in time into a longing for something unattainable in this life. The Incarnation had marked the realization of God in Jesus. Jesus was not 'all men' but one man in particular, and the Ascension marked the particular subject's return to that first object state whence it had come at a particular time and in a particular place. Even the 'personal' God of Protestant theology must be completely other if he, God, is to be a positive object for all. Even the early Christian church, then, to which Hegel accredits greatest authenticity, begins to replicate the very positivity of Judaism against which Jesus taught. The use of the word 'kingdom' as in 'Kingdom of God' in the church, Hegel suggests (SCF 278), implies domination. The language of lordship and bondage, however beneficent the dominant lord, reinforces the sense of estrangement between individuals, rather than the identification of each with the other. The Kingdom of God should be understood in terms of love rather than domination. Hegel writes, quoting again from Saint John:

" 'A new command give I unto you,' says Jesus, (John Ch 18 v34) ' ... that ye love one another. Thereby shall men know that ye are my disciples.' ... Is there an idea more beautiful than that of a nation of men related to one another by love? Is there one more uplifting than that of belonging to a whole, which as a whole, as one, is the Spirit of God whose sons the individual members are?" (SCF 278).

The idea of the spirit of a community suggests something transient just as the community itself is transient. For Hegel, the spirit of Judaism was historically contingent because it was a product of history rather than the creator of its own history. The false subjectivity of a community acting 'as a single subject' made it prey to the contingencies of a certain time and a particular place; it could not be free.

In spite of the Gospel injunction, Hegel argues, the early Christians' consciousness, not of the presence of God but only of 'the absence of the Son of God', was to all intents and purposes a similar idolization of a certain time and a particular

place. This was both a denial of freedom and a consequent lapse into historical determinism which led to the belief that the primitive church was subject to a 'fate' superior to God. Hegel now sees the religion of unfulfilled desire not just as a psychological fact, but as a cultural reality in the life of the early church. It is the correlative in religious practice both of the disciples mourning (after the ascension of Christ) for the loss of their Lord, and the seeming vanity of their as yet unrewarded anticipation of the Kingdom. To be sure, Hegel's account of the consequences of Pentecost is theologically heterodox in the extreme, because it construes the coming of the Spirit not as a token of the continued presence of the risen and ascended Lord, but as the source of an infinite longing (*Sehnsucht*) for the Lord who is absent. Yet Hegel's theology in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* is a theology of Spirit indeed: a theology of Incarnation which describes the embodiment of ultimate truth in human experience and so in human history. This is a significant advance beyond Hegel's position in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*. Hegel had earlier construed the problem of Positivity and Inwardness as a self-division (in the minds of individual

Christians) which had been intensified within some developments of the Lutheran tradition and, more specifically, by the legacy of Kant. He now sees it as a dialectic acted out in the history of Christianity itself.

In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, Hegel argues that the historical tragedy of Christianity has its roots in the experience of the early Christians, indeed of the disciples themselves. The appearance of Christ had manifested a Real Presence indeed; and it is to this Presence that Hegel gives the name 'Spirit'. The Ascension leads to a self-division within the life of Spirit itself: a divorce between the consciousness of the disciples, conscious of the absence of their Lord, and the Divine Spirit itself, which is the ground of that consciousness. The history of Christianity after the time of Christ is now, for Hegel, the history of the inevitably frustrated attempts of the Christian community to heal the rift: to bridge the gap between the positivity of the Christian religion, embodied in the institutions and practices of European Christendom, and the alienated consciousness which is the heart of that religion. At this stage in Hegel's development, then,

the problem of positivity and inwardness is not, in the first place, one which derives from the intellectual climate of post-Kantian Germany, or indeed even from the Lutheran theological tradition as such. It is a problem, in Hegel's understanding, inherent in the structure of Christian experience and in the whole history of Christianity since the apostolic age. To be sure, Hegel still understands that problem as taking a particular form, and a particular intensity in the religious and philosophical culture of his time and of his nation. He sees that culture now as the expression, not the cause, of a deeper and more universal malaise.

Hegel's concept of the 'Christian religion' has also changed. In the title of Hegel's essay *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, the word Christianity (*Christentum*) means both Christian faith and the objective reality of Christianity which is Christendom. In his later essay Hegel is not primarily concerned, as he was in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, with an analysis of the doctrinal content or the institutional forms of Christian belief, but with the whole historical life of the Christian tradition in its interaction

with the secular world. There is thus a profound paradox in Hegel's early concept of embodied Spirit. That concept implies, by definition, a concern with that historical objectivity and historical continuity of the Christian tradition which is eschewed by Lutheran theology and Kantian philosophy alike. Hegel's application of that concept leads to the affirmation that the Truth of Christ can never be adequately embodied in the world, indeed that the real history of Christianity is necessarily one of mourning for the loss of that truth. In the title of his essay Hegel uses the word *Christentum* to mean at once both faith and history; but in his argument he affirms that faith and history can never be reconciled. In his title also he refers to the history of Christianity with a word – *Schicksal* (Fate) – which implies that that history is not a promise but a threat: that the Christian community is condemned to be both inextricably involved, and yet irrevocably at odds, with the surrounding secular world.

The paradox in Hegel's concept of embodied Spirit gives rise to a new and, henceforth, fundamental tension in his critique of post-Kantian theology. Hegel's theology is now the basis for his

cultural and psychological critique of the inadequacies of the Kantian ethic; not the other way round. In his later essay he exposes not only the inner contradictions of the Kantian standpoint, but the source of those contradictions in a contradictory structure of experience. He shows that neither the Kantian philosophical position nor the Lutheran theological one is able to understand or even to articulate what the 'problem' of positivity and inwardness is; both positions are part of the very difficulty which they seek to transcend. But Hegel's own position in this later essay is still inextricably linked to that same culture of alienated inwardness which he also seeks to enlighten and so to overcome.

I will now consider the manner in which Hegel's concept of human subjectivity changed and developed from his position in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* to that in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*. In the later work Hegel articulates human subjectivity as follows:

"When Subjectivity is set against the Positive, service's moral neutrality vanishes along with its limited character. Man confronts himself, his character, his deeds become the man himself. He has barriers only where he erects them himself and his virtues are determinacies which he fixes himself. This possibility of making a clear-cut opposition between virtue and vice is freedom in the 'or' of virtue or vice" (SCF 225).

For Hegel now, the relationship between human subjectivity and the positive forms of human ethical life, be they secular or religious, is not one of sheer opposition. On the contrary, he now sees the sphere of positivity as a potential expression of the self-conscious freedom and rationality of mankind. Man is indeed, as a social animal, dependent upon the community. Even if in time he chooses to reject family and community, he is, until he is conscious of that choice, entirely dependent upon members of that family or community for the nurture necessary to his reaching any state of independence. After attaining such a state of consciousness within the community, he has become a moral agent exercising his moral agency in the choices he

makes with regard to the consequences of this action (or neglect of action) for others in the community. His taking the values of the community and making them his own is not the same as his being determined by the community, for such a choice is his own self-determination and he is fully responsible for its consequences.

(viii) Hegel's Theology and the Need for Philosophy

The theme of moral agency, the equation of freedom with responsibility and the emphasized role of virtue are central to Hegel's overcoming the Kantian reduction of religion to morality. That which the law forbids must be forbidden because it is wrong, rather than that some action, intention or neglect of duty should be held to be wrong because it is forbidden. Man's moral agency is real only for one conscious of his relation to community. To be truly conscious of one's subjectivity then is to be conscious and self-conscious. Even one estranged from community can only be truly subjective if he is conscious of that estrangement. One who has not attained self-consciousness

can only be determined by the world in which he lives, whereas the truly subjective agent can only be self-determining. Man's growth in self-consciousness towards a fulness of Subjectivity in no sense marks a diminishment of Objectivity. The mutual definition of the consciousness of the 'I am' and the 'that which I am not' entails their growth together rather than the growth of either at the expense of the other. Hegel does not, at this stage, concern himself overmuch with the comparison of Subject to Object, but rather with the relationship between Subject and Object. Hegel anticipates in the language of morality and virtue, freedom and responsibility, the account of human subjectivity as set out more explicitly in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. For all the changes in his conception of Spirit throughout the evolution of his philosophical system, the fundamental notion of Spirit as the relation of Subject to Object remains constant and begins here in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*. Hegel's new concept of Spirit in this work thus has wide implications for both his epistemology and his social philosophy; but the roots of that new concept lie in his changed theological account of the problem of human subjectivity.

For Hegel in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, the Spirit of Judaism lay in the false subjectivity of an entire people attempting to act as a single subject, conscious only of the existence of an objective world of which is predicated little because God was conceived as distant and not of this world. In Christianity, however, some degree of identity of the Subject with the World and with God – everything which the subject perceives to be 'other' than himself – is necessary in order to facilitate self-knowledge as the path to freedom. The Christian concept of God is for Hegel the most lucid means of articulating the relation of Subject to Object, God as Spirit. Furthermore, Christianity must overcome rather than replicate the slavish unquestioning obedience to Pharisaic legalism which he takes to be characteristic of the denial of the Subject's subjectivity. If the Subject freely chooses to live in denial of his own freedom he condemns himself to being determined by the world around him, instead of taking steps to determine his own fate, his own history.

In Hegel's understanding of Judaism, God is not in the World. God's objectivity lies in his being wholly 'other'. The God who is 'a jealous God' and who made Man, Adam, 'in his own image, 'is nonetheless wholly beyond human understanding and his commandments cannot be questioned. God determines the fate of the Children of Israel. God is indeterminate in as much as he remains invisible, unknown and ever distant. God determined the fate of the Jews in the pillar of cloud guiding the exiles out of Egypt and in speaking as the still small voice; but still he is not there. The idea of Jesus as Messiah was at least intelligible even if unacceptable; but the idea of Messiah as God incarnate in mere man, tangible and mortal, was incomprehensible. Hegel cites Saint John's Gospel:

"He makes himself equal with God in that he calls God his Father" (John Ch 5 v18) and continues,

"In his opposition to Judaism he stood before their eyes only as an individual ...; continually appealed ... to his oneness with God who has granted to the son to have life in himself just as the Father has life in himself. He and the Father are one ... But

Jesus calls himself not only Son of God; he is also the Son of Man" (SCF 261).

The Spirit of Christianity is distinct from that of Judaism in as much as it enables the Subject to realize his own subjectivity in relationship to other people, and with the objectivity which is God made tangible and mortal in the incarnation of God in Jesus and all men.

At the conclusion of *The Early Theological Writings*, then, Hegel leaves his readers with something of a paradox. He has arrived at a theological doctrine of embodied Spirit which offers a potential resolution of the problem of positivity and inwardness which is the principal concern of his early work. By redefining the problem of human subjectivity in terms of a Christian doctrine of Spirit, Hegel shows how the positive forms of human ethical life might potentially express rather than constrain that subjectivity. Whether they will do so depends upon the form which that ethical life takes; and at this point in his development Hegel still reads the whole history of post-apostolic Christianity as the story of the failure of its institutions and doctrines to offer

humanity anything more than an alienated consciousness and experience of itself. For Hegel in 1800, that alienation is manifest in an irrevocable self-division in the consciousness of reflective Christians, who are conscious at once of their potential unity with God in the Spirit and of their actual distance from God in the life of alienated Spirit which is that of the Christian community on earth.

Hegel now understands this alienation as the source of that sense of unrequited longing which has characterized Christianity since Christ's Ascension. The key theological problem he still has to resolve, therefore, is that of the historicity of God Incarnate. For orthodox Christian theology, the absence of God from the world was ended with the return of God as Spirit to the disciples at Pentecost. However, that return is neither historically nor philosophically *real* in the culture of Hegel's time. It is unreal because of the theological and philosophical culture to which Hegel belongs and which his early essays both criticize and expound. With the writing of *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* in 1800, however, Hegel has reached a turning point.

Henceforth, he comes to see philosophy not only as the source of the self-division in the life of his time, but as the means of its resolution. He sees the task of his philosophy as being to make the idea of Spirit both fully intelligible and fully present in the consciousness of his age. Philosophy is to be the means by which the divided self is healed and the eternal longing is fulfilled.

Chapter II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

This chapter shall deal with Hegel's 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. It shall be shown that the existential problem which Hegel outlines in exclusively theological terms at the close of *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* (1800) is further developed and then resolved philosophically in these lectures. This resolution is achieved to some degree in the light of developments explored in texts written in the intervening years.

The existential problem is, for example, re-formulated in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) in philosophical rather than theological terms, and the relationship between philosophy and religion is examined at length in Hegel's essay *Faith and Knowledge* (1802). However, dealing with these texts in any depth is not the central task of this chapter, and only the *Faith and Knowledge* essay shall be dealt with at all in the exposition of

the transition in Hegel's thinking between the *Early Theological Writings* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.*

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

(i) Faith and Knowledge

During the period between his writing *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* and then *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel's religious thought underwent a decisive transformation. The key development is in Hegel's concept of philosophical thought and its relevance to theology.

In the *Early Theological Writings* Hegel regards philosophy in the same light as art: that is, as being finite. This finitude lies in philosophy and art being, respectively, manifestations of the sum of the philosopher's and of the artist's experiences: expressions of a finite totality in a particular place at a particular time; the articulation of the historical and the contingent (*1). At

this stage, Hegel argues in truly Kantian vein that philosophy can furnish knowledge only of the finite. Religion (in its Ideal rather than its Positive form), on the contrary, aspires through the mystical to go beyond the bounds of reason and to transcend the historical and the contingent. However, the fate of Christianity has been to follow the Positive, leaving the Ideal to philosophy.

In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* Hegel had developed a concept of Spirit as historically embodied truth. However, his account of that truth in terms of an analysis of the primitive Christian community concluded that the Christian Spirit was condemned eternally to long for satisfaction beyond the real historical world. By the time he wrote *Faith and Knowledge* in 1802, Hegel had moved on from an implicit adherence to this theological position to a diagnosis of its cultural origins in the philosophical and theological thought of his time.

Hegel's antipathy towards Catholicism did nothing to undermine the high regard in which he held mediaeval theology; indeed, he

valued it even above the Protestant theology of his contemporaries (LPR 78f). Mediaeval theology and philosophy both accommodated and complemented one another in their common task of analysing and illuminating human experience and the will and nature of the divine. Hegel argues that, rather than having eliminated the Positive in contemporary Protestant Christianity, German Protestant theologians had opened religion to the criticism from philosophers that it was rationally untenable. In Hegel's view, Kant had signally failed to bridge the ever widening gulf between religion and philosophy, precisely because he endorsed rather than condemned the Positive.

In the essay *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel writes:

" ... The beautiful subjectivity of Protestantism is transformed into empirical subjectivity. The poetry of Protestant grief that scorns all reconciliation with empirical existence is transformed to the prose of satisfaction with the finite and of good conscience about it" (FK 61).

Just as philosophy, especially Hegel's own, had identified the existential problem of Protestantism and Inwardness, so it must be philosophy which shall complete religion in its pursuit of the infinite and not religion which shall complete philosophy. Religion, as distinct from theology, has become a moment of philosophy, for philosophy must encompass all in its infinitude whilst religion, Protestant Christianity as the church-in-waiting, caught in the eternal if beautiful longing for the second coming of Christ, can only be a finite thing. The Church has made itself finite, determined its own fate thus and can strive again for the infinite only through philosophy.

Hegel has moved away from an immanent description, which is directly rooted in an engagement with The New Testament, of the consequences of post-Kantian Protestant theology. He has moved towards an attempt to understand the reasons why that theology has historically arisen and how its apparently destructive consequences can be understood and so potentially overcome. In this new project, philosophy has an important role to play in two respects. First, Hegel is concerned not only with Protestant theology but with what he calls 'the reflective

philosophy of subjectivity' (*2): the whole intellectual movement of post-Kantian philosophy, which he sees as underpinning the modern Protestant theology of his time. In analyzing that philosophy, Hegel is also criticising it and pointing to a way beyond it. Hegel now sees the theological dilemma of his time not (as he had done in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*) as a consequence of the application of post-Kantian critical philosophy to Christian theology, nor (as he had done in the *Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*) as the inevitable fate of post-apostolic Christianity. He now analyses that dilemma by describing the intellectual life of his time in terms of the central categories of Christian theology: the Fall, the Incarnation, the Passion and Redemption. In *Faith and Knowledge*, the embryonic concept of Spirit which Hegel had developed in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* is brought within the compass of orthodox Christian theology. In his subsequent religious thinking, Hegel's articulation of the concept of Spirit will become both more philosophical and more closely related to that theology. Secondly, and even more importantly for his subsequent development, he affirms for the first time that

philosophy is the sole means of resolving the theological antinomies of his time. In an essay published in 1801, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, Hegel stated that the self-division (*Entzweiung*) in the experience of his time is at the root of the need (*Bedürfnis*) for philosophy, and that only speculative philosophy in the Hegelian sense can meet that need. In *Faith and Knowledge* he argues that theology is a necessarily philosophical enterprise and that philosophy is a means of rescuing Christian intellectual integrity from the self-divided modes of Christian belief which threaten that integrity (*3).

Indeed, Hegel now sees philosophy as an integral part of Christian experience. In another essay, published in 1802, *On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism*, Hegel writes of philosophy as an activity made necessary by the Fall itself: the self-division in all human experience brought about by the emergence of human self-consciousness (*4). For Hegel, philosophy is both the consequence and the redemption of this condition of self-division. At the end of the *Faith and Knowledge* essay (FK 190 –

191 *et seq.*) Hegel alludes to Pascal's dictum that 'Nature is such that it signifies everywhere a lost God both within and outside man' (*5). This apprehension, which Hegel links to the words of the Lutheran chorale 'God himself is dead', he connects also with startling directness to the task of philosophical thought. Philosophy, Hegel states, must enact a '*speculative Good Friday*' which represents for speculative thought the spiritual development articulated in narrative form by the Gospel stories of the Passion. The problem now, it would seem, lies not in the nature of the difference between philosophy and religion as discourses upon human experience, but in their indissoluble connection as modes of human experience. The two focal points of the Christian narrative, the Fall and the Passion, to which Hegel alludes in his essays of 1802 are taken up again, in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* and elsewhere in his mature philosophical system. Hegel's developing understanding of both theological doctrines in relation to the task of philosophy is to be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

As he sees philosophy as the most self-conscious form of human knowledge, Hegel, in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay, gives to philosophy the principal role in healing the self-division which he deems to be so characteristic of his age. He maintains that the key theological antinomies of his time – those between faith and reason; God and history; the Kantian good will and the means of its realization – have arisen because the time in which he is writing is, above all, an age of self-consciousness: one in which people reflect upon the relevance of human subjectivity to every sphere of thought and experience. Hegel differs profoundly from his Romantic contemporaries in his belief that the division brought about by this process of reflection can be healed only by a more adequate mode of reflection, not by a retreat into an illusory prelapsarian state of naïve immediacy. Philosophy, Hegel argues, is the most appropriate way forward because it reveals the significance of the emergence of self-consciousness itself, and describes that emergence as essential to the Christian understanding of truth. Philosophy can reveal, for example, why the critical philosophy of Kant is a necessary consequence of the Protestant Spirit in religion. It can reveal

why two of the most influential philosophies of Hegel's time, the critical rationalism of Kant and the intuitionism of Jacobi, are part of the same intellectual movement, even if their explicit discourses are opposed.

In the *Faith and Knowledge* essay, however, Hegel's idea of the relevance of philosophy to the problems of his time is defined only in relation to the particular thinkers with which the essay deals. That idea is only defined substantively in his mature philosophical system, which is itself only fully developed some twenty years later; it is with this that the next part of this chapter shall be chiefly concerned.

(ii) The Philosophy of Spirit

The key to Hegel's mature understanding of the significance of philosophical thought is his doctrine of Spirit, which is expounded in the third part of his *Encyclopaedia* known as *The Philosophy of Spirit* (*6). In Hegel's later system the concept of Spirit denotes a principle of knowledge. It means both the truth

as it is embodied in all reality, and that which enables us to know that truth. For Hegel, both philosophy and religion are modes of Absolute Spirit. This means that both are concerned not with any particular and limited sphere of experience, but with the whole truth of experience. The difference between philosophy and religion consists not in their object, which is, in both cases, God, but in their mode of consciousness of that object: for philosophy, the explicit concept, Hegel's *Begriff* (PM 302f paras 572 – 573; cf LPR 77 – 80, 144f); for religion, the necessarily partially inarticulable form of knowledge (*Vorstellung*) which Hegel calls representation, or picture-idea (PM 299, para 565). The theological content of Hegel's concept of Absolute Spirit lies in the relationship it establishes between philosophy and religion as modes of absolute knowledge. That relationship, as it is expounded in the final section of *The Philosophy of Spirit* which is entitled *Absolute Spirit*, shall now be considered.

Fundamental to Hegel's argument in this section of the Encyclopaedia is his affirmation that Absolute Spirit is God. Thus Absolute Spirit is neither just an epistemological principle,

nor merely an idea which is to be understood in regulative or analogical terms, but the name Hegel gives to the Reality which in religious worship is called God. It follows that philosophy for Hegel is an activity which is intrinsically religious in kind, whether or not it is concerned with a specifically theological subject matter. Hegel does indeed (LPR 79) describe philosophy as a mode of worship (*Gottesdienst*). Philosophy is also, for Hegel, an absolutely presuppositionless mode of thought. In the concluding section of *The Philosophy of Spirit* Hegel is concerned with what enables philosophy to have presuppositionless knowledge: what Hegel calls 'Absolute Knowledge', and with the implications of that possibility for the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Hegel emphasises that 'Belief and faith are not opposite to consciousness or knowledge', and writes of Absolute Spirit:

"Religion, as this supreme sphere may be designated, ... must no less be regarded as objectively issuing from the Absolute

Spirit which, as Spirit, is in its community ... God must be apprehended as Spirit in his community" (PM 292, para. 554).

God as infinite and Absolute Spirit is the presuppositionless consciousness. Its presuppositionlessness lies in its being self-conscious; the infinite absolute knowing itself. The Spirit that is religion is a part of the Absolute Spirit that is its Object, God.

"To know what God as Spirit is – to apprehend this accurately and distinctly in thoughts – requires careful and thorough speculation. It includes, in its forefront, the propositions: God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God" (PM 298).

Thus, Hegel's doctrine of Absolute Spirit, which is at once philosophical and religious, means that absolute knowledge, knowledge without presuppositions, is not knowledge without a real context in human experience. It is the most adequate mode of human consciousness of the truth, which is made possible by

what Truth itself *is*: the self-disclosure of the self-knowing Spirit of God.

(iii) Mediation and Spirit

Hegel's mature doctrine of Spirit represents a decisive advance beyond his position in Faith and Knowledge due to its account of the manner in which philosophy mediates religious truth. For Hegel, philosophy is distinguished as a specifically conceptual and absolutely self-reflective mode of knowledge. Philosophy is about mediation; it is able to abstract from the immediacy of every particular mode of consciousness and to show that what appears to be an immediate manifestation of truth implies the mediation of the conscious subject. It follows that philosophy is able to give to religious faith, which is mediated not by conceptual reflection but by pictorial representation, a form of knowledge about itself to which faith, as faith, could not attain. However, this does not mean that philosophy is necessarily at odds with religion, or indeed even separable from it.

Hegel describes the object of philosophical knowledge, and the means by which that object can be known, both in philosophical syllogisms as the absolute self-mediation of Spirit and in theological terms as the life of the Trinity. He characterises both the difference and the connection between God and mankind's consciousness of God in terms of a doctrine of self-mediating Spirit which is also a doctrine of how philosophy is made possible by the self-consciousness of God:

"These three syllogisms, constituting the one syllogism of the absolute self-mediation of spirit, are the revelation of that spirit whose life is set out as a cycle of concrete shapes in pictorial thought. From this its separation into parts, with a temporal and external sequence, the unfolding of the mediation contracts itself in the result – where the spirit closes in unity with itself – not merely to the simplicity of faith and devotional feeling, but even to thought. In the immanent simplicity of thought the unfolding still has its expansion, yet is all the while known as an indivisible coherence of the universal, simple, and eternal spirit in itself. In this form of truth, truth is the object of philosophy" (PM 301, para. 571 *et seq.*).

Hegel's account of the connection between philosophy and religion as modes of Absolute Spirit thus has two major consequences. First, philosophy is able to give to religion a form of self-conscious insight which religion as such could not achieve, but which has a directly religious relevance. Secondly, philosophy is able adequately to understand itself only by understanding its own activity as part of the religious reality of Spirit. It follows, then, that the reality of absolute spirit, which makes philosophy possible as an absolutely presuppositionless mode of knowledge, also enjoins philosophy to acknowledge its religious basis. Hegel characterises a philosophy of absolute knowledge which refuses to acknowledge its religious basis as a destructive irony which is empty and vain:

"If the result – the realised Spirit in which all mediation has superceded itself – is taken in a merely formal, contentless sense, so that the spirit is not also at the same time known as implicitly existent and objectively self-unfolding – then that infinite subjectivity is the merely formal self-consciousness, knowing itself in itself as absolute – Irony. Irony, which can

make every objective reality naught and vain, is itself the emptiness and vanity, which from itself, and therefore by chance and its own good pleasure, gives itself direction and content, remains master over it, is not bound by it – and, with the assertion that it stands on the very summit of religion and philosophy, falls back rather into the vanity of wilfulness" (PM 301 para 571).

The paradox here is that it is precisely the presuppositionless character of speculative reason which Hegel describes in theological terms. He accounts in terms of a doctrine of the self-mediation of Spirit for the possibility of philosophy's being a self-conscious mode of knowledge. It is possible to describe that doctrine only in terms of the categories of philosophical speculation. However, Hegel's point is that to do so is to describe *any* capacity for absolute knowledge in terms which ignore the full human relevance of that capacity. Hegel uses the language of theology and writes of absolute knowledge as knowledge of God, not because he wants to give a theological aura to an entirely secular argument, but because he wants to

draw attention to the imbalance which is entailed by formulating his argument in entirely secular terms. That his argument *could* without logical inconsistency be so formulated is clear, but so to argue in secular terms would be to do exactly that of which Kierkegaard accuses Hegel: to read a system as if it encompassed everything except the contingent existence of the person who thinks through and seeks to understand it (*7). In the language of John Henry Newman, it would be to give notional but not real assent to Hegel's doctrine of absolute Spirit (*8). Yet Hegel's own characterization of a possible, and entirely coherent, response to his philosophy as "empty and vain" shows that he is aware of the force of the charge. It is for that very reason that Hegel's speculative doctrine of Absolute Spirit points towards what Emil Fackenheim suggests is an implicit doctrine of religious assent (*9). Underlying Hegel's speculative doctrine there is an implied existential doctrine about what should be the appropriate response of the Hegelian thinker to the truth which the philosophy of absolute knowledge discloses.

In *The Philosophy of Spirit*, then, Hegel gives explicit content to the project of speculative philosophy as a solution to the problems of post-Kantian theology, which he had first propounded in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay some twenty-five years before. His argument in *The Philosophy of Spirit* is germane to the question of the religious relevance of human subjectivity and the associated problem of inwardness and positivity, which were the central focus of his *Early Theological Writings*. Through his doctrine of Spirit, Hegel redefines the problem of human subjectivity as one concerning the relationship of human self-consciousness to the self-consciousness of God. He describes the emergence of human self-consciousness as a necessary moment in the life of the Divine Spirit, and in so doing offers an implicit response to the conflict between pietism and rationalism in the culture of his time. He shows how the most self-reflective mode of human knowledge, philosophy, can be understood as made possible by the self-manifestation of God; and how the apparently immediate certainty of pietism can be understood only as the product of a mediation in the mind of the believer.

The key problem of Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, that of positivity and inwardness, was a problem predicated upon a theological dualism: how a living Christian faith is to affirm itself against the dead weight of positive doctrine, without falling into rationalistic abstraction or the empty intensity of pietism. Positive doctrine was on one side, human self-consciousness on the other. In *The Philosophy of Spirit*, a problem of dualism has been replaced by a problem of relationship: how is human self-consciousness, which is both human consciousness of God and God's self-disclosure to humanity, to be understood? Hegel's mature doctrine of Spirit means that pietism and rationalism, inwardness and positivity, are all modes of human self-consciousness, and thus implicitly connected to the interpretation of human self-consciousness which Hegel now understands as the task of philosophy. Even in this most speculative of Hegel's treatments of theological problems, the existential origin of his philosophical theology is neither ignored nor reductively explained. In *The Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel addresses more directly the perceived tension between, on the one hand, the relevance of speculative philosophy to the

theological needs of his time and, on the other, the difference apparent between philosophical speculation and Christian experience.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

(iv) Hegel's Critique of Contemporary Christian Theology

Hegel's argument about Absolute Spirit is obviously relevant to German philosophical theology in the aftermath of the Kantian critique. I shall here attempt to find whether or not it is also relevant to the cultural and existential malaise of modern Protestantism which Hegel so powerfully exposes in his *Early Theological Writings*. In order to demonstrate such a relevance, Hegel must make it clear that his doctrine of Embodied Spirit is about the Christ of history and the Christian experience of the modern believer, and also concerned with a particular set of problems in philosophical theology. Hegel attempts to do this in a work which is concerned with both the ontology of Spirit and the reality of Christian experience. That work (much of which

was written without any intent to publish, and only reconstructed later from the lecture notes of some of Hegel's students) is a compilation of lectures of 1827, *On the Philosophy of Religion*, in which much of his mature philosophy of religion is articulated and which shall now be examined in some detail.

The first part of this work consists in Hegel's exposition of 'the Concept of Religion' as a particular mode of human consciousness of absolute spirit, and a critique of contemporary German philosophical theology which is more detailed than the one which he had already sketched in outline in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay. The second part is an overtly theological and indeed Christological discourse which deals directly with many of the existential problems initially broached in *The Early Theological Writings*. The remaining sections of this chapter shall deal with each part of Hegel's argument in turn and examine the relationship between them.

Hegel begins the Preface of his Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* by setting an agenda:

"What we must take into consideration is first, the relation of the philosophy of religion to philosophy as a whole and second, the relationship of the science of religion to the needs of our time" (LPR 75).

The first of these considerations, the relation of the philosophy of religion to philosophy as a whole, has already been examined. The second, the relationship of the 'science of religion' to the 'needs of our time' (*10) is – in expository terms – more problematic.

Hegel's characterization of 'the needs of our time', which in his view constituted the crisis in contemporary (and especially in German) theology, refer not only to the existential problem already discussed at some length, but also to at least four other trends in theological thought, all of which he saw as further compounding rather than alleviating that crisis.

I have already dealt with Kant's reduction of religion to morality and stressed its inadequacy as a resolution of the problem of positivity in the Christian context. Another of the four

theological schools of thought to which Hegel took exception not only predates Kant but is best illustrated in the work of Kant's own teacher, Christian Wolff, whose attempt to champion Pietistic thought resulted in his Rational Theology, which sought to prove the existence of God whilst already presuming that existence as a given. Here, God as the object – *Gegenstand* – is for Hegel so far removed from the individual believer as to undermine that central tenet of Lutheran theology, the personal relationship between the believer and God. Thirdly, there is Historical Theology which, because of its complete lack of concern with the study of God and the divine, is in Hegel's understanding not a theology at all. It is rather an anthropology of religion from an historical perspective and therefore concerned solely with the role of religion in the social fabric of communities. Fourthly, there is the Intuitionist Theology of Jacobi and Schleiermacher, which claimed that a type of quasi-mystical relation between God and the individual was philosophically tenable. For Kant, as has already been seen, God – like freedom – is a regulative idea or ideal. Such ideals are objective because universal in their validity, rather than

merely subjective, as ideals in the minds of particular individuals are. The idea of God is perfect and complete. However, an individual's understanding of such an idea is partial and his rational faculty for appropriating such a regulative ideal may be imperfect and variable. Kant's God, God as idea, is a means to an end rather than an end in itself: that end being morality. The implicit unattainability of the regulative ideal Hegel interprets as a denial of the humanity of God: a humanity which is essential to the doctrine of the Incarnation. By contrast, God for Jacobi and Schleiermacher is not a 'Platonic idea' but a reality which can be experienced directly through feeling. Jacobi's 'intuitionism' was anti-rationalist, a defence against the pantheism and determinism which he regarded as consequential upon Kantian rationalism.

Hegel sums up the Jacobian/Schleiermacherian position thus:

" ...The conviction of the age (is) that God is revealed immediately in the consciousness of human beings, ...The human being knows God immediately. This immediate knowing is called 'religion'" (LPR 86).

A faith in the immediate certainty of God felt and intuited is apparently self-justifying. Hegel seeks to demonstrate the inadequacy of such a position in its own terms, those of mediation and immediacy.

Hegel's critique of all these theological positions (LPR 85ff), whether rationalist or pietistic in kind, demonstrates that their emphasis on either the intellectual inaccessibility or the immediate intuitive apprehension of God is the product of a form of mediation, the relationship of human self-consciousness to God, which neither standpoint, on its own terms, can acknowledge or understand. The chapter shall now deal with Hegel's own Christian theology as set forth later in *The Philosophy of Religion*, in which his attempt to overcome the theological dilemma of his age is most fully expounded.

The most significant passages in Hegel's account of Christianity are those which treat the Fall and the Incarnation. In these passages Hegel relates to his mature philosophical theology two concerns which have dominated his thought since the concerns which were the subject matter of the *Early Theological Writings*:

the self-division in human experience which is brought about by self-conscious knowledge, especially philosophy; and the difference as well as the relationship between the philosophical and the religious mode of truth, between concept and representation. In *The Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel discusses both of these issues in terms of the central problem of this thesis: the relationship between human subjectivity – the self-conscious experience of humanity – and the absolute truth which is absolute Spirit or God.

Hegel describes religious knowledge as a form of non-conceptual knowledge (*Vorstellung*) or representation (LPR 144f *et seq.*). From a Religious standpoint this means that there is a necessary gap between the subject who is conscious of religious truth and that truth itself, which Hegel calls the object of religion. Religion *qua* religion, must thus be a mode of consciousness of God which is not fully self-conscious. This religious consciousness commonly expresses itself through images, artefacts and sacred rituals in which the Divine is seen to be embodied, whilst the mode of that embodiment is not yet

fully transparent to conceptual thought. Hegel's point, however, is that even for the philosophically unreflective religious consciousness there is a mediation (*Vermittlung*) and thus a conscious relationship in the consciousness of the believer (cf. LPR 133 – 137). Thus it follows that religious knowledge can never be wholly inarticulable or wholly limited to the private experience of the believer. A religious representation is thus potentially universal because representation must be an object for consciousness, and consciousness is capable of universal communication.

Hegel's idea of the relation of philosophy to religion comes to fruition in his account of the relation of representation to concept. Religion is not God, nor is it even an immediate apprehension of God, although religion may well encompass such an apprehension. Religion cannot be the immediate knowledge of God for it is rather the mediation of God as absolute spirit. Religion does not differ from philosophy because religion is immediate and philosophy is mediated knowledge of God. On the contrary: both philosophy and

religion, as modes of absolute Spirit, are ways in which the Divine Spirit is mediated by the self-consciousness of humanity. The difference between religion and philosophy lies in the manner in which that mediation takes place. Religion is the representation, the '*Vorstellung*' of God, of absolute spirit; it is thus necessarily a consciousness of God as opaque to conceptual thought and yet intimately present in the consciousness of the believer. Philosophy is the concept, the '*Begriff*' of God, of Absolute Spirit; it is thus necessarily a consciousness of God's being fully present as the object of conceptual thought, even if such thought does not exhaust the experience of the philosophically reflective believer.

(v) The Fall: Immediacy, Representation and Mediation.

Hegel relates this argument about the role of mediation to an examination of the doctrine of the Fall. For Hegel, the story of the Fall is significant as much for its form as for its content. He begins his account by drawing attention to the fact that the biblical doctrine is first articulated precisely as a contingent

event. The form of the biblical narrative thus raises the problem of representation (*Vorstellung*) and mediation (*Vermittlung*) which Hegel has earlier explored in his account of Jacobi and Schleiermacher. What does it mean that the Fall has happened, and what is the significance of that happening for the self-conscious mind which seeks to interpret and to make its own the biblical account?

" ... It is the familiar story in Genesis. The gist of it is that God created human beings in his own image: this is the concept of the human being. Humankind lived in Paradise; we can call it a zoological garden. This life is called the state of innocence" (LPR 442 – 443 *et seq.*).

The point of Hegel's apparently ironic interjection is not that the narrative contingency of the biblical story is irrelevant to the inner truth of the doctrine. It is rather that the very form of the narrative implies a disjunction between that form and its interpretation. Even if we believe that Eve really offered, and Adam really ate, the apple, it is neither the offering nor the

eating which is wrong, but the transgression of God's commandment. But the commandment, if it is to be real, has to take a contingent and determinate form.

"The story says, too, that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in Paradise, and that human beings disobeyed God's command by eating of it. On the one hand, it is formally set down that this eating was the transgression of a commandment. The content, however, is the essential thing, namely, that the sin consisted in having eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and in this connection there comes about the pretence of the serpent that humanity will be like God when it has the knowledge of good and evil."

Hegel now considers the meaning of the commandment and its transgression. His interpretation might appear to issue in a paradox: that it is consciousness of good and evil which is the source of evil itself. Yet this consciousness is what is specifically human, without which there could be no human history.

"It is said, then, that human beings have eaten of this tree. It is clear, as far as the content is concerned, that the fruit is an outward image – it belongs only to the sensible portrayal. What it really means is that humanity has elevated itself to the knowledge of good and evil; and this cognition, this distinction, is the source of evil, is evil itself. Being evil is located in the act of cognition, in consciousness. ... cognition is the source of evil. For cognition or consciousness means in general a judging or dividing, a self-distinguishing within oneself" [LPR 443].

In his exegesis Hegel is thus, at least on this point, theologically orthodox. He reads the biblical record to mean that the activity of self-conscious thought – precisely that "judging or dividing, a self-distinguishing within oneself" which he elsewhere defines as the specific activity of philosophy (cf PM 301, para. 571) – is the source of human pride and thus of evil. How then can we reconcile Hegel's theological orthodoxy with his devotion to philosophical thought in precisely this sense, indeed with his hostility to any form of theology which abjures self-reflective knowledge? A clue is to be found in Hegel's interpretation of the

subsequent part of the biblical narrative. The serpent, Hegel argues, does not lie, because God himself confirms its words:

"The story reports that an alien creature, the serpent, seduced humanity by the pretence that, if one knows how to distinguish good and evil, one will become like God. In this way the story represents the fact that humanity's deed springs from the evil principle. However, the confirmation of the fact that the knowledge of good and evil belongs to the divinity of humanity is placed on the lips of God himself. God himself says 'Behold, Adam has become like one of us' (Gen. 3:22). So the words of the serpent were no deception. This is customarily overlooked along the lines of the ingrained prejudice to the effect that this is an irony of God; that God has made a joke" (LPR 444) (*11).

Hegel's reading means that the serpent is only apparently alien to humanity, whilst God's words are real. The irony is made apparent when one considers those Christian believers who are unable to acknowledge or to understand the relevance of God's confirmation of human freedom. For Hegel, the Fall is a happy

fault indeed, because it is the beginning and the precondition for human knowledge and human freedom alike. But it is also the origin of man's expulsion from Paradise, and of the second, real, prohibition of eating the fruit of the Tree of Life. It is the source of man's estrangement and (what is the same thing) of man's consciousness of his own finitude. Hegel here gives a theological basis for the thesis, which he had first advanced in 1802, that philosophy is both the agent and the redeemer of 'the fall of man which is in thought' (ref. *der Sündenfall des Denkens*) (*12). That is so because self-consciousness has a dynamic which can only go forward, not back, because it has been set in motion by God himself at the dawn of humanity. Yet the story of Eden is indeed the story of a fall: the beginning of alienation and of what Hegel calls the 'infinite anguish (of human beings) concerning themselves' (LPR 447).

Hegel's reading of the Fall is thus, at once, ontological and existential. It is an ontological account of the meaning and possibility of fully self-conscious knowledge, but it is also an existential account of the consequences of that knowledge.

This double affirmation is of the greatest possible relevance to Hegel's understanding of the role of philosophy in the conceptual mediation of the truth of Spirit, and thus to his conception of the theological task of philosophy in his age. This relevance is apparent above all in the account which Hegel gives of the relationship between the biblical narrative itself and its interpretation. He argues that "the expression 'the first human being' signifies humanity in itself or humanity as such – not some single, contingent individual, not one among many, but the absolutely first one, humanity according to its concept" (LPR 443). However, this essential truth of humanity *cannot* be represented as a concept; because its import is precisely that something has happened to humanity, that humanity has a condition which is also the precondition for all human thought and experience. Thus the Fall must be represented as a particular event occasioned by the act of a particular first human, which is nevertheless transmitted to humanity as such because of inherited sin. For Hegel, then, the Fall is both a contingent and a necessary truth. It is necessary because it defines the meaning of human self-consciousness in relation to

God, but contingent because it does so as something which has 'happened' to humanity as such: something for which every human being is responsible but which no existing human being has initiated. Indeed, it is a truth which is necessarily contingent: one which can adequately be communicated only by a contingent and particular narrative.

Hegel's account of the Fall illustrates the existential correlative of a philosophy of absolute knowledge. The possibility of such knowledge, he argues, is grounded in a spiritual revelation which is one of disjunction, indeed of alienation, as much as it is one of reconciling insight. This ambivalence is itself apparent as much in the distance between the form of the narrative and its interpretation as it is in Hegel's own understanding of the doctrine of the Fall. Hegel's examination of the Fall thus shows a new way of conceptualizing the problem of the positivity of the Christian religion which is also the problem of mediation and immediacy which is the key problem of Christian theology in his time. Hegel has shown that the apparent divorce of the positive biblical narrative from its reflective interpretation is not the

result of the importing of critical philosophy into the domain of Christian experience. On the contrary, it is intrinsic to that experience itself. Thus the tension between positivity and inwardness, which Hegel in his early writings had identified as the most important problem for Christian theology, has now become part of Christian theology: a problem which is also an opportunity, because it sets the agenda both for salvation history and for the Christian theological tradition.

Hegel's theology of the Fall conceives of the problem of human subjectivity in terms of a story of alienation which is also the story of the birth of human freedom and self-consciousness. That story is implicitly also human history itself. The narrative of the Fall represents that history by an allegorical account which, appropriate to its Old Testament origins, points the reader to a sphere of interpretation lying beyond the positive events which it describes. In his theology of the Incarnation, Hegel will show, by means of a trinitarian theology of embodied Spirit, how God is involved in experientially defined human history and how this involvement defines the mode of its

interpretation. Later in this chapter I shall examine in some detail at Hegel's theology of the Incarnation. First, however, I shall put that later theology into context by outlining the account of the difference between Judaism and Christianity which Hegel gives in *The Philosophy of Religion* and shall consider how that account has moved beyond the position of the *Early Theological Writings*.

(vi) The difference between Judaism and Christianity

For Hegel, the key difference between Judaism and Christianity is that Judaism conceives of God not as immanent, but as the absolute other, as non-phenomenally objective (*13). Hegel refers to the oriental religious maxim that 'God has many names'. In Judaism, however, the name of God is singular and absolute rather than predicative: the *I am* or *I am who am* in the Hebrew language is in this tradition held to be sacred in itself and, in token of this sanctity, is not to be spoken or written. The absolute otherness of God entails the idea of finitude, which is itself contrary to that of the absolute. In the Jewish Hebrew

scriptures the name of God was indicated only by four dots in the text in place of the written name and was always referred to obliquely as 'the word'. In Judaism, God creates man 'in his own image' and wrestles all night with Jacob so that he (Jacob) will be called '*Israel*' (he who has struggled with God); he is the small voice of calm which speaks to Elijah through earthquake, wind and fire. He is the jealous God. Nevertheless, in all of this God remains, paradoxically, completely other.

The God of Judaism, then, is mediated negatively. The religion which has God as entirely 'other' represents him in the sanctification of His name, which may not be spoken or seen, and His power over the lives of men is referred to abstractly by means of symbols conjured into the mind's-eye by words alone. This is religion acknowledging its own finitude. Judaism has an implicit belief in the Infinite which encompasses it, but cannot believe in the possibility of any adequate consciousness of the Infinite. God is acknowledged by default, but is never explicitly an object of consciousness.

The Jewish abhorrence of, and strict taboo upon, the depiction of God by means of graven imagery or by idolatry in any form is significantly reflected in The New Testament book of The Revelation to Saint John. Because there is, in the Jewish tradition, no iconography whatsoever as a focus for devotion, the visual imagination had great scope, to which Saint John's graphic account, pregnant with references to bizarre visual symbols, testifies.

However, it is the passage at the beginning of the first of the two major Johanine texts which best illustrates how Hegel's understanding of the Incarnation as the resolution of Judaism's problem of the finitude of God is firmly rooted in traditional Christian doctrine, even if the problem which it seeks to resolve had not before seemed so central to the concerns of Christian theologians. A belief in the infinitude of a God who – in the Jewish tradition – remains 'completely other' is, to Hegel, incomprehensible since it is without any conceptually discernible content. By contrast, John's use of the Greek logos (*λογος*) for the name of God is God objectified, God as reason making himself objective to himself: the 'word made flesh'.

Hegel's account in *The Philosophy of Religion* of the difference between Judaism and Christianity represents a decisive advance beyond the position of the *Early Theological Writings*. Now, for the first time, Hegel sees Christianity as explicitly representing the full reconciliation of man to God. He now proffers a doctrine of Incarnation which is integrally related to a doctrine of the Fall. Judaism and Christianity are neither antithetical nor analogous to one another. For the mature Hegel, Christianity has disclosed the meaning of the absolute distance between man and God (which he takes to be constitutive of Judaism) and has overcome that distance.

For the early Hegel, Christianity was analogous to Judaism either because (as in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*) its positive modern practice was at odds with living faith, or because (as in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*) the consciousness of the early Christians was of an absent, not a present Lord. Now Hegel sees such self-divided modes of Christian belief as consequences of a false and alienated understanding of Christian truth: one which fails to grasp the meaning for Christian theology as well as for Christian

experience of the paramount Christian doctrine of Incarnation. It is to Hegel's treatment of that doctrine that I will now turn.

(vii) The Incarnation: The Self-mediation of Spirit in History

The focus of Hegel's theology of Incarnation is his idea of the historicity of Spirit. As has been remarked, his theology of the Fall posits a necessary disjunction between the contingent historicity of man's condition and the history of human self-consciousness which the Fall inaugurates. In the Incarnation, however, contingent history becomes also the history of God for the Spirit. Salvation history is also the secular history of humanity; the only difference is in the consciousness of the meaning of historical contingency which the coming of Christ makes possible. Hegel now sees the task of the Christian neither (as he had done in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*) as that of reconnecting a lifeless modern practice to an original Christian revelation, nor (as in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*) as that of reconciling a longing for a risen but departed Lord with participation in the real secular world. For Hegel in

The Philosophy of Religion, the question of how to live in the real secular world is the same as that of how to be a Christian. It is because of the Incarnation that the meaning of historical contingency *is* the meaning of Christian faith. What is specifically Christian is not a particular part of history, still less a transcendence which history constantly suggests but never embodies; but a particular attitude to the history which the Christian shares with the whole of humankind.

This new perspective has profound implications for the manner in which Hegel expounds the Christological texts of the New Testament. Unlike his treatment of the Fall, Hegel's treatment of the Incarnation cannot assume a cleavage between the contingent narrative and its interpretation. That is so because, in the Christian understanding, the New Testament narrative both defines the condition of historical contingency and (because of its Trinitarian premises) contains within itself the resources with which to furnish an adequate Christian understanding of that condition. This raises an entirely new problem related to the historicity of the biblical account.

For Hegel, the problem of interpretation presented by the narrative of the Incarnation is the opposite of that posed by the story of the Fall. The problem, now, is not that the spheres of narrative and interpretation are necessarily disjoined, but that they are absolutely congruent. The historicity of the life of Christ must also be the historicity of Spirit: Incarnation. The narrative form in which that life is reported in scripture cannot therefore be incidental to, let alone separable from, the truth of Incarnation itself. The problem now is not how to connect but how (if at all) to separate, narrative and interpretation. If Spirit is fully embodied in the particular Person of Christ at a particular time, in what sense does Christ represent all other human persons born before and since his ministry? What is the relationship between present, and thus equally historically contingent, faith and the event of the Incarnation upon which it depends?

The Trinitarian theology, which Hegel defended as integral to Christianity is, for him, the solution to these problems. Hegel's account of the witness of the Spirit and his treatment of the Holy

Spirit (*Heiliger Geist*) is grounded in the philosophical doctrine of Spirit which comes to fruition in his mature philosophy of religion. The Trinity, then, has God the Father creating man in his own image. Evil, Hegel maintains, is the knowledge of the disjunction between self and other; it is negation of what is. Man does not know himself or his own otherness until acquisition of the knowledge of Good and Evil, the dawning of self-consciousness, makes him God's other and makes him know that he is God's other. The asking of the question, 'What am I?' or 'What is God?' caused God in the Genesis account to expel Adam and Eve from Paradise:

" ... the man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil ..." (Genesis 3, 22).

Yet such questions are, for Hegel, the beginning and the end of Philosophy and the object of true religion.

The second person of the Trinity is God the Son. Trinitarian theology in Christianity dates back to the Church Fathers at

least but, as such, does not appear in the Gospel accounts at all; and indeed the Jewish tradition of the Messiah is always couched in terms of 'God's elected one' or 'God's anointed one', and never refers to God himself as incarnate and born of woman. The identity of the Son of God with God the Father, with God Incarnate as God the Son, is as essential to Hegel's Christianity as it was to that of the Church Fathers and to the Lutheran Church.

God becoming completely and truly human in all respects is God objectifying himself in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Incarnation is God's realisation of himself, and the reconciliation of himself to himself; it is also the reconciliation of the human subject to its own other. The Fall of Adam was God's estrangement of self from self, God's estrangement from himself as object, from himself as his own other; God is estranged from all mankind. The Incarnation, then, is the reconciliation of God with God, of God with all humanity and of humanity with itself. The Incarnation of God as Christ is religion's articulation of the self-conscious realization of self, as subject and object transcending estrangement in reconciliation.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is Hegel's emphasis on the historical contingency of the Passion which both grounds his later Trinitarian theology and connects it to his wider philosophical endeavour. For Hegel:

"The appearance of the God-Man has to be viewed from two different perspectives at once. First he is a human being in accord with his external circumstances. This is the non-religious perspective (*irreligiöse Betrachtung*) in which he appears as an ordinary human being" (LPR 458 *et seq.*).

However, this standpoint, which considers Christ only as a teacher of ethics who emerges at a particular point in human cultural history, cannot be the position of Christian theology:

"When Christ is viewed in the same light as Socrates, then he is regarded as an ordinary human being, just as in Islam he is regarded as a messenger of God in the general sense that all great men are messengers of God. If one says no more of Christ

than that he is a teacher of humanity, a martyr to the truth, one is not adopting the religious standpoint; one says no more of him than of Socrates" (LPR 458 *et seq.*).

This is because the Incarnation is God entering history. The Incarnation is the reconciliation of God (as the divided self) to himself. In the creation of man – the finite out of the infinite – God has divided the infinite; the infinite is estranged from itself in finitude. Reconciliation through Incarnation is God incarnate in all humankind: for Christ must be all human beings.

The entry into history must come not just from above but from the Other: it does not negate human history but changes our understanding of what that history is and means, by changing our relationship to our own humanity. Incarnation brings about a changed relationship of the human Spirit to itself, although that change is already implicit:

"Second, there is the perspective that occurs in the Spirit or with the Spirit. Spirit presses toward its truth because it has an

infinite cleavage and anguish within itself. It wills the truth; the need of the truth and the certainty thereof it will have, and must have. Here for the first time we have the religious view (*das Religiöse*)" (LPR 458 *et seq.*).

For Hegel in *The Philosophy of Religion*, the Spirit is indeed *really* present, because *really* human. His Christology emphatically portrays Christ as a particular: what he calls 'just one human being' who appears 'in the flesh' (cf John 1 vv14) (LPR455). The appearance of Christ is not the manifestation of an idea but the self-disclosure of a person:

"The necessity (that the divine-human unity shall appear) is not first apprehended by means of thinking; rather it is a certainty for humanity. In other words, this content – the unity of divine and human nature – achieves certainty, obtaining the form of immediate sensible intuition and external existence for humankind, so that it appears as something that has been seen in the world, something that has been experienced. ... Humanity in itself as such is the universal, or the thought of humanity.

From the present standpoint, however, it is not a question of the thought of humanity but of sensible certainty; thus it is just one human being in whom this unity is envisaged – humanity as singular, or in the determinacy of singularity and particularity" (LPR 454 – 455).

Incarnation, then, is about real self-recognition is a really existing, particular Other Person. The Other Person is also the Other of humanity. Hegel's treatment of the life and passion of Christ in *The Philosophy of Religion* is unique in his system. Unlike in his *Early Theological Writings*, Hegel's treatment in the later work is not chiefly concerned with the spirituality of post-Kantian Lutheran Germany, or even with the reaction of the primitive Christian community to the disappearance of Christ from the world and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Nor, however, is Hegel's Christology primarily focused upon the trinitarian implications of the idea of spirit. On the contrary, Hegel's concern is now with the story of Christ's passion, and the person of Christ as a suffering and humiliated individual whose death is an entirely contingent and particular, a really

human, death. Morever, as the death of a malefactor it stands 'in stark contradiction to the worldly authority' (LPR 462 – 463). In *The Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel understands the Gospel accounts as historical in an entirely different sense from that of his earlier writings and that of his speculative philosophy of history. He uses the term *Geschichte* (story) to refer to the life of Christ in a sense deliberately distinct from that other meaning – 'history' – which informs Hegel's usage in all his other mature works.

"The truth to which human beings have attained by means of this history (*Geschichte*), what they have become conscious of in this entire history, is the following: that the idea of God has certainty for them, that humanity has attained the certainty of unity with God, that the human is the immediately present God. Indeed, within this history as spirit comprehends it, there is the very presentation of the process of what humanity, what spirit is – implicitly both God and dead" (LPR 468).

In *The Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel's treatment of the Incarnation is not (as it is in *The Philosophy of History*) part of a cultural narrative of European Christendom. The death of Christ is not to be understood as a world-historical event or as the beginning of a new stage in European culture. The 'meaning' of the suffering and death of Christ was not and could not be discerned by his disciples as it happened. It becomes apparent only after the Ascension, which is the precondition for the coming of the spirit which will lead them into all truth (cf John 14:25-26 & LPR 467 – 468).

The order of priority in Hegel's account in the *Early Theological Writings* is thus reversed. His concern now is not, in the first place, the spiritual life of the early Christian community and its yearning for an absent God but with the immediate truth of the present God: a truth which is now recognized to be inseparable from the suffering of humanity and wholly resistant to appropriation by any philosophy of history.

Hegel's account of the Crucifixion is striking above all for its dissociation of the value of Christ's sacrifice from any cultural

source of value. Christ's death is described not only as a natural event but as the most degrading and dishonourable form of death: one entirely at odds with every existing positive social ethic. It is with this emphasis, which becomes even stronger with Hegel's revision of his lecture manuscripts from 1827 to 1831, that Hegel introduces his version of the doctrine of the Resurrection (LPR 468 CF 465 for 1831 MS). At this point, if at no other, Hegel's work can be defended against the charge of Karl Barth (*14), later taken up by Karl Popper (*15) that Hegel's theology is a legitimation of political and cultural power. As Andrew Shanks points out (*16), Hegel's theology of human culture is inclusive only because it is rooted in an identification of Christ with those whom culture has marginalized.

Hegel resolutely refuses to assimilate either the Person of Christ, or the Church of his Disciples, to the cultural narrative of Christendom. However, he also refuses to accept Christ as the leader of a sect at odds with secular history. Hegel thus avoids the triumphalist temptations of both Catholic and Protestant theology. For Hegel, Christ is not the master of culture or

inwardness, but the suffering servant irrevocably engaged with every part of historical experience but fully absorbed by none.

For Hegel therefore, in *The Philosophy of Religion*, the problems raised by the historicity of the Gospel accounts are thus quite different from those addressed in his *Early Theological Writings*. The problem of the authenticity or otherwise of Christian faith is no longer (as it was in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*) one which is concerned with the gulf between the positivity of modern Christian practice and the immediate faith of the primitive Christians in the Apostolic age. Nor is it (as it was in *The Spirit of Christianity And Its Fate*) a problem of replication of the alienation of the early Christians, yearning for the return of their ascended Lord, in the experience of modern Protestant Europe. Nor is it the problem Lessing perceived, that of the 'broad ditch' between contingent truths of history and necessary truths of reason. For Hegel, now, the reality of Incarnation is the precondition for the Christian reading of history; not the other way around. Incarnation is for Hegel ontological and by its very nature has to take a contingent historical form. In Hegel's

theology, Jesus of Nazareth is indeed an historical individual in whom God became man, a being in time and space, and so the embodied reconciliation of the divine and the human. In order to accept that theology on its own terms, all that has to be believed is that Jesus of Nazareth really lived and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Hegel's account of the meaning of that event, and thus his doctrine of the Resurrection, is an ontological one which does not depend for its coherence upon the evidence of historical criticism of the Biblical texts. However, Hegel's ontology derives its force from his insistence that the philosophy of absolute knowledge must be fully exposed to the existential truth embodied in Christ's Passion. Hegel's speculative doctrine of absolute spirit, which is an ontology of both human subjectivity and human knowledge of God, is credible only if it can be related to the account of human subjectivity which his mature Christology offers.

(viii) Critical Summary

An assessment of that credibility must consist of two related judgements. First, it is to be decided whether Hegel's conception of philosophy as a theologically indispensable activity, and his realization of that conception in his own trinitarian theology, is both philosophically and theologically cogent. Secondly, it is to be determined whether Hegel's mature Christology can be related to his speculative doctrine in a manner which neither neutralizes its existential content nor requires that his theology be judged on criteria radically different to those applicable to his speculative thought. Both of these judgements bear upon the problem of human subjectivity as set forth in Hegel's thought and upon the relationship between Hegel's early and later works. The first judgement concerns the coherence of Hegel's thesis, first expressed in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay and eventually worked out in his mature speculative system, that the problems of post-Kantian Lutheran Christianity can be resolved only by a philosophy of Absolute Spirit in the Hegelian mode. The second judgement

concerns an assessment of the relationship between Hegel's early and later works: whether Hegel's mature philosophical theology resolves or evades the theological crisis which he delineates in his early writings. The existential implication of Hegel's doctrine of absolute spirit is made manifest only in his mature philosophy of religion and more specifically in his mature Christology. The assessment of the success or otherwise of Hegel's mature philosophical theology is therefore also an assessment of the extent to which that theology addresses and resolves, and does not simply ignore, the theological problem of human subjectivity as outlined in Hegel's early work. It is to such a universal judgement as this that I will now turn.

It has been shown that the concept of Spirit, first outlined in *The Spirit of Christianity And Its Fate* and more fully articulated in his mature speculative system, is a response to the problem of human subjectivity which was itself first set forth in Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*. The (philosophical) concept of Spirit enables Hegel to address key contemporary theological

dualisms such as the tension between pietistic inwardness and positivistic religious practice, and the inadequacy of the theologies of inwardness and deistic rationalism as responses to the post-Kantian doctrine of the intellectual inaccessibility of God. The concept of Spirit has such significance because it is a moment of self-conscious knowledge. It articulates Hegel's insight that the gap between immediate experience and reflective knowledge, which is apparent in the philosophical theology of his time, can only be bridged by a development towards, rather than a withdrawal from, that fully self-conscious theology which has already begun. It is for this reason that Hegel's doctrine of Spirit must be a philosophical one. Hegel's reference at the end of his *Faith and Knowledge* essay to a 'Speculative Good Friday' makes clear, however, that his doctrine of the theological necessity of philosophy pertains not only to theological dialectic, but to Christian experience. Indeed, Hegel speaks there of philosophy as the catalyst of a real, and not notional, apprehension of the meaning of the Passion of Christ. Speculative philosophy, Hegel asserts, enables the Passion of Christ to be understood not just as an

historical event but as an existentially real and immediate one which is 'restored to the full truth and harshness of its God-forsakenness.'

Hegel thus regards speculative thought as an experience intrinsically related to that of Christian faith. He considers philosophy to be an absolutely presuppositionless mode of knowledge which is not logically compelled to assent to the doctrine of Spirit in religious terms. Hegel's philosophy of Spirit enjoins that assent only by drawing attention to the self-division in experience which the failure to assent would produce. That indirect and implicit argument is of great relevance to any estimate of the success or otherwise of his philosophical theology and for his identification of the scope of philosophy with that of Christian experience. Hegel's warning, that the withholding of religious assent would make his doctrine of Spirit 'empty and vain', that it would Imply a retreat Into self-enclosed subjectivity, takes its force from an understanding that the object of Hegel's philosophy is indeed the totality of truth which is God. Hegel warns that the refusal of religious assent, whilst

logically coherent, is the consequence of a sterile irony which alienates one from a full apprehension of the truth. The logic of Hegel's argument, no less than that of Kierkegaard, shows that only by making a leap of faith may one move from a purely philosophical to a properly theological apprehension of his doctrine of Spirit.

Hegel does not use the language of faith or of immediate personal commitment in his exposition of that paradox, which is nonetheless implicit in his thought. It is the idiom as much as the substance of Hegel's religious thought which appears to lend credence to Kierkegaard's charges that Hegel wants to 'arrange the truth of Christianity in paragraphs' (*17), and has truly forgotten the *really existing* individual who is both the subject of Christian belief and the writer and reader of every philosophy. Hegel can be defended against these charges only through that understanding of the connection between his doctrine of Absolute Spirit and his mature Christology which emerges as a response to the problems he treats in his *Early Theological Writings*. The central concern of all Hegel's

philosophical and theological work is to reconcile the modern idea of subjectivity with the idea of God. The primary difference between Hegel and his modern theological critics (of whom Kierkegaard was the first and, subsequently, the most influential) is that Hegel perceives of the modern discourse about subjectivity, which had reached a crisis in the theology of his day, as a hindrance rather than as a help to that reconciliation. For Hegel to endorse (as did Kierkegaard) the "passion of the infinite" in the soul of the believer as the sole criterion of religious truth would be for him to endorse that 'unhappy consciousness' in the theological culture of his time which it is his constant endeavour to overcome. However, it would be seriously misleading to conclude from this that Hegel's thought is not concerned with the relevance of human subjectivity to Christian belief.

The relevance is most fully apparent in the interdependence of Hegel's Christology and his mature philosophy of Spirit. Hegel's philosophical doctrine of Absolute Spirit may persuade one to believe in a paradox: that presuppositionless knowledge has its

precondition in the embodiment of truth in the world which is Spirit and therefore Incarnation. Hegel's Christology shows one the human meaning of that paradox: that there is a precondition in human experience for what Hegel means by Absolute Knowledge. At this moment, if at no other, in Hegel's thought the philosophical mind must be, and know itself to be, wholly impotent in relation to experience. Hence Hegel's thought must acknowledge Incarnation as a *real* and not a metaphysical gift.

Hegel's Christology is thus both the part of his mature system which most directly relates to the problems of his early work, and the source of a certain disjunction in his mature thought. That disjunction is an integral part of Hegel's philosophical achievement and is relevant to the structure of his thought as a whole. As Gillian Rose maintains, Hegel at the close of *The Philosophy of Religion* addresses the social and cultural consequences of the reinterpretation of Christian belief which his philosophy would itself enact. Hegel acknowledges that the philosophical reconciliation of alienated subjectivity to the objective form of modern culture, even if that reconciliation is

real, is nevertheless partial, because it is accessible only to that 'isolated order of priests' (*18) which is the modern intellectual class. Gillian Rose interprets this as a rare moment in which Hegel 'simply despairs' of the rationality of the real. This despair, however, is also a necessary acknowledgment of the human paradox inherent in a philosophy of Absolute Knowledge which is also a philosophy of Incarnation. Without it, Hegel would indeed be Kierkegaard's 'innkeeper or professor of philosophy who imagines that he is a shrewd enough fellow to detect anything, unless God gives the condition' (*19). Hegel's political theology would indeed have abandoned the radical critique of Christendom as is to be found in the *Early Theological Writings* in favour of a triumphalist theology of culture. Hegel, in short, would have done what Karl Barth accuses him of doing: he would have substituted his dialectical logic for the true logic of Grace, and thus in his philosophy have produced an obstacle, not a means, to the reception of Christian truth.

Hegel's coupling of a speculative doctrine of Spirit with a real theology of the Cross is not indicative of an all-encompassing

ambition in his thought and thus of its necessary failure: on the contrary, it is the vindication of any claim to theological relevance of his thought and also the point at which his system is most evidently vulnerable to the critique of experience. It is not by accident that *The Philosophy of Religion* is the most open-ended of Hegel's major works. Unlike *The History of Philosophy*, Hegel's final (1831) manuscript of *The Philosophy of Religion* ends not with harmony but with dissonance (*20). The disharmony (*Misston*) between philosophical interpretation and the reality of historical experience is not just incidentally acknowledged but is intrinsic to the nature of Hegel's undertaking. In *The Spirit of Christianity And Its Fate* Hegel exposed the traumatic consequences for the early Christian community of the Disciples' belief that salvation history had come to an end with the Ascension of their risen Lord. In his later work he shows that it is precisely that disappearance which is the precondition for the Spirit's presence amongst them after the first Pentecost. Any modern Christian reading of Hegel must similarly insist that his theology can be vindicated only by its openness to future experience. Understanding the continuity between Hegel's *Early*

Theological Writings and his apparently very different speculative system also enables one to understand the relevance of both to contemporary (and especially religious) experience.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is concerned with an aspect of Hegel's work which has long been neglected. In the early part of this century Hegel's religious thought was largely of interest only to theologians. The 'linguistic' turn of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, in addition to the logical separability of Hegel's secular system from his theological works, meant that Hegel's theology was long considered to be one of the most dated, if not dead, parts of his speculative philosophical system. Whenever it was seriously considered at all by commentators, it was often dismissed as being an obstacle which, because of the spiritual arrogance and cultural prejudice which the integration of theology into a speculative system seemed to entail, inhibited any acceptance of Hegel's thought as a whole.

However, in the last thirty years the religious writings have become a more central concern of Hegel scholarship than they had been in the previous half-century. With the advent of deconstruction, and the consequent questioning of the dividing line between philosophy and other forms of discourse, Hegel's

religious thought has stimulated considerable interest both in his theology and in the possibly 'religious' character of his thought as a whole. This change is wholly appropriate, not just because Hegel stated that his philosophy could be adequately understood only in theological terms, but also because the debate as to whether the thought of Hegel is to be granted theological or secular status is of the utmost importance to its reception and to its relevance today. As philosophers have begun to take Hegel's philosophical theology seriously, they have also started to pay serious attention to his early theological writings, which have been long neglected in relation to his thought as a whole. This second development is highly important, because the movement of Hegel's thought from those writings to his mature system illuminates both the promise and the difficulty of his philosophical theology. It is in this evolution that the nature of Hegel's problematic attempt to link speculative philosophy with Christian theology becomes most fully apparent.

It is with that development that this thesis is concerned. It set out to do two things: to demonstrate a continuity in Hegel's theological concerns from his *Early Theological Writings* to *The Philosophy of Religion*, and to show that Hegel's later resolution of the problems set out in his early writings does indeed adequately address, rather than speculatively evade, that tension between secular reason and Christian belief which Hegel had earlier identified as characteristic of the intellectual life of his time. My argument has focused upon the problem of human subjectivity – the relationship between human self-consciousness and human consciousness of God – as expressed in Hegel's religious thought. Hegel's mature concept of speculative philosophy, I have argued, should be seen as a response to a problem which is theologically as well as philosophically relevant. However, his later philosophy of religion *cannot* be reduced to that conceptual definition of religion as a mode of Absolute Spirit which he proffers in the last part of his *Berlin Encyclopaedia*. On the contrary, his later philosophical theology includes a persuasive account of the tension, in addition to the connection, between Christian

experience and speculative thought. This account reaches its climax in the doctrine of the Incarnation which Hegel presents in the second part of *The Philosophy of Religion*.

Hegel's early theological writings are, therefore, in no sense irrelevant to his speculative philosophical endeavour. On the contrary, they define the cultural and theological problem to which that endeavour responds and also, at least in part, lay down the kind of criteria one might use in assessing its success. Hegel's mature *Philosophy of Religion* can neither be set against his *Early Theological Writings* nor be credibly presented as a definitive speculative resolution of the problems which those early writings raise. As Emil Fackenheim (*1), Raymond Plant (*2) and J. N. Findlay (*3) have indicated, the later Hegel believed that the theological antinomies of his age could, in the last analysis, only be resolved in philosophical terms. Hegel's philosophy does indeed (as he hoped to have demonstrated in the *Faith and Knowledge* essay) meet the need which arises from the self-division in the Christian Consciousness of Hegel's time. It can meet that need only at the cost of acknowledging a

paradox: that of philosophy's being necessarily connected to the whole of Christian experience and yet unable (contrary to Croce's charge) 'to reduce that experience to itself'. That paradox is manifest above all in Hegel's mature Christology which does not, contrary to what John Milbank (*4) claims, neutralize the conflict between the modern Christian conscience and the claims of the 'Christian' state. Rather, the opposite is the case. Hegel's mature Christology shows the meaning of that conflict and its relevance to philosophical theology. Hegel's Trinitarian doctrine of Absolute Spirit cannot be separated from the existential Christology which he presents in *The Philosophy of Religion*.

Andrew Shanks has argued (*5) that Hegel's 'inclusive Christology' is the necessary and persuasive consequence of his critique of the 'unhappy consciousness' which he diagnoses as definitive of modern Protestantism: the self-legitimation of the Christian community through its construction of a spirituality which is in opposition to the secular world. However, Hegel's inclusive Christology is not to be had without a cost,

since there is an inevitable tension between his claim, based upon a specifically theological logic, that his system can communicate Absolute Knowledge, and the context into which, if Hegel's theological works are to be taken seriously, that claim must operate. So that speculative claim of Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* must be contextualised, even subverted, by the real Christian theology which he proffers in *The Philosophy of Religion*. This paradoxical relationship also means that the problems raised by Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* are 'resolved' in his later work only in the sense that their meaning is then fully disclosed: a meaning which pertains indeed to what Karl Barth (*6) called the 'logic of Grace' as well as to the logic of speculative dialectic. Thus the questions arising from Hegel's early writings – questions concerning the differences between lived experience and positive doctrine, modern belief and its historical warrant, philosophical rationalization and immediate experience – are not abolished, but rather preserved and more powerfully restated in his later work.

If this is so, then much of what has been persistently regarded as peripheral to Hegel's thought belongs more properly at its centre. For example, Hegel's acknowledgement (at the close of *The Philosophy of Religion*) (*7) that the synthesis between theological consciousness and philosophical reflection cannot diminish, but may indeed increase, the tension between those two spheres of experience, derives from the paradox at the heart of Hegel's religious thought. This paradox, which his speculative system proffers, is that a philosophy of Absolute Knowledge, if it is to be credible and especially if it is to be Christian, must find a means of acknowledging its own infirmity in relation to experience. Hegel's own acknowledgement is thus not an aberration on the margins of his thought but rather an affirmation which lies *at* its heart. I have sought, in this thesis, to demonstrate that such a synthesis is borne out of the creative tension between theological consciousness and philosophical reflection (as much as by the successful progression from Hegel's earlier to his later theology) and also from the ambivalent relationship between that theology and the structure of his philosophical thought as a whole. Much of the power of

Hegel's theology and the source of much of its influence at the time in which it was written, lies in its exposure of a certain kind of false Christian humility: the 'unhappy consciousness' of modern Protestantism, which justifies its own authoritarian practice by appealing to a God who can never be known, but who yet commands complete and successful engagement with the secular world. It is for this reason that what I have here described as Hegel's theological acknowledgement of the infirmity of his speculative thought in relation to experience, has to be recognized as implicit, to be reconstructed by Hegel's readers, rather than stated and affirmed explicitly in his text. However, nearly two centuries after it was written, and at a time in which the potential for ideological abuse of Hegel's own discourse is all too apparent, this creative tension in Hegel's thought can be usefully made more explicit in an interpretation of his *entire* speculative system, and not exclusively of the theological works.

Nonetheless, as Fackenheim has illustrated in a recently republished essay (*8), Hegel's thesis of the actuality of the

rational (and rationality of the actual), is one which can have only a theological meaning. To grasp such a meaning is to enable one to refute some of the cruder objections which have been levelled against Hegel's central philosophical claim. However, as Fackenheim explains, one must be concerned not only with meaning, but also with truth. If one is to assent to Hegel's claim, there must be discoverable criteria for assessment and questions must be asked about one's own experience, the answers to which may enable one to judge the truth of Hegel's discourse upon experience.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

(*1) Benedetto Croce, *What is Living And What Is Dead Of The Philosophy Of Hegel*, trans. Douglas Ainslie, London, 1915, p145ff.

(*2) Kierkegaard, *Concludng Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Howard Hong, Princeton, 1941, p99f.

(*3) See especially Bultmann's critique of Hegel in *History and Eschatology*, Edinburgh, 1957.

(*4) Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams, London, 1951, p192ff.

(*5) Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, Oxford, 1968, p135ff ('*Concerning the Value of History*').

(*6) Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1972, p420.

(*7) Malcolm Knox, *A Layman's Quest*, London, 1969, p101.

(*8) J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Reexamination*, London, 1958, pp49 – 52.

(*9) Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, Chicago, 1967, p7.

(*10) Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London, 1981, p92ff.

(*11) Rowan Williams, '*Hegel and the Gods of Post-Modernity*', in Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (eds.): *Shadow of Spirit*, London, 1992, p72f.

(*12) Raymond Plant, *Hegel: an Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, pp15 – 16.

(*13) Andrew Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology*, Cambridge, 1991, p20ff.

(*14) *op. cit.*, p122ff.

(*15) John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990, pp168 – 173.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

(*1) My argument here, which is intended only to establish a context for my own original exposition of *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* and *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, is indebted to Richard Kroner's introduction to *The Early Theological Writings* (ETW 5 – 6). *The Life of Jesus* essay has not been translated into English, and is published in German in *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. Hermann Nohl, Tübingen, 1907, pp73 – 136.

(*2) The relevant section is the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*, known as *The Philosophy of Mind*. For Hegel's definition of these terms, see (on *Moralität*) PM 249f and (on *Sittlichkeit*) PM 253f.

(*3) I have omitted references to Kant at this stage because my focus here is entirely on Hegel's own text. Detailed references to Kant in relation to Hegel's argument in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* and *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* are given later in this chapter.

(*4) Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. and ed. H. J. Paton, London, 1948, pp65 – 67.

(*5) *op. cit.*, pp88, 98.

(*6) *op. cit.*, p70 ('The Categorical Imperative').

(*7) *op. cit.*, p65f. Kant's example of the shopkeeper, who refrains from short-changing a child only out of concern for his reputation, exactly illustrates this point.

(*8) *op. cit.*, pp68 – 69.

(*9) *op. cit.*, pp99 – 100.

(*10) *op. cit.*, p131.

(*11) *op. cit.*, p67 *et seq.*

(*12) *op. cit.*, p76.

(*13) Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, p10.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

(*1) See, for example, Hegel's formulation in the text known as *Fragments of a System* (1800):

"Philosophy therefore has to stop short of religion because it is a process of thinking and, as such as process implies an opposition with non-thinking (processes) as well as the opposition between the thinking mind and the object of thought ... In particular it has to recognise the illusions generated by its own infinite and thus to place the true infinite outside its confines" (ETW 313).

(*2) The full title of Hegel's 1802 essay is *Faith and Knowledge, or the Reflective Philosophy of Subjectivity in the Complete Range of Its Forms as Kantian, Jacobian and Fichtean Philosophy.*
See especially FK 57ff.

(*3) Hegel: *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Philosophy*, trans H. S. Harris and Walter Cert, Albany, 1977, p89 ('The Need of Philosophy'):

"Dichotomy is the source of the need of philosophy; and as the culture of the era, it is the unfree and given aspect of the whole configuration."

(*4) This essay has not been translated into English, but is available in Hegel, *Werke*, ed. Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart, 1928, vol. 1, pp 171 – 189. ('Über das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik') See pp 176 – 177.

(*5) The reference is to Pascal, *Pensées*, para. 441 (Brunschwieg)

(*6) In the English translation by William Wallace (from which my references are taken) this is referred to as the Philosophy of Mind. I use the term Philosophy of Spirit in my own exposition to emphasise *both* the philosophical and theological meanings of Hegel's term *Geist*. It will be apparent that this dual meaning is directly relevant to my argument.

(*7) Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p108, cf p34.

(*8) John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent*, Notre Dame, 1979, p86 ff.

(*9) Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, p23.

(*10) This is also the title of one of Hegel's own subsections in the 1827 lecture MS (LPR 80 – 99).

(*11) On Hegel's doctrine of the Fall, see Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, pp 129 – 133 ('Creation and Fall, or the Christian Understanding of the Human Condition').

(*12) Hegel, Über das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik, *loc. cit.*

(*13) For the following discussion see LPR 357 – 375 ('The Religion of Sublimity, or Jewish Religion') and 391 – 404 ('The Consummate Religion').

(*14) See Karl Barth: *Credo*, 1936, p76f; cf Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p135ff.

(*15) Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, London 1966, vol. 2, p271f.

(*16) Shanks, *op. cit.*, p 31ff.

(*17) Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p19.

(*18) Gillian Rose, *op. cit.*, p119.

(*19) Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy*, trans. David Swenson, Princeton, 1936, p52.

(*20) See Gillian Rose's translation, *loc. cit.*

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

(*1) Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, p160ff ('The Transfiguration Of Faith Into Philosophy').

(*2) Plant, *op. cit.*, p79ff.

(*3) Findlay, *loc. cit.*

(*4) cf Milbank, *op. cit.*, pp172 – 173.

(*5) Shanks, *op. cit.*, pp31 – 34.

(*6) *loc. cit.*

(*7) This comes at the close of Hegel's 1830 MS of the *Lectures On The Philosophy Of Religion* and is not available in LPR. It is, however, available in Peter Hodgson's three volume edition of the same work. See *Lectures On The Philosophy Of Religion*, 3 vols., ed. and trans. P. C. Hodgson, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984 – 87.

(*8) Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, And Historicity*, ed. John Burbidge, Toronto, 1996, pp164 – 171 ('Hegel On The Actuality Of The Rational And The Rationality Of The Actual').

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